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A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE
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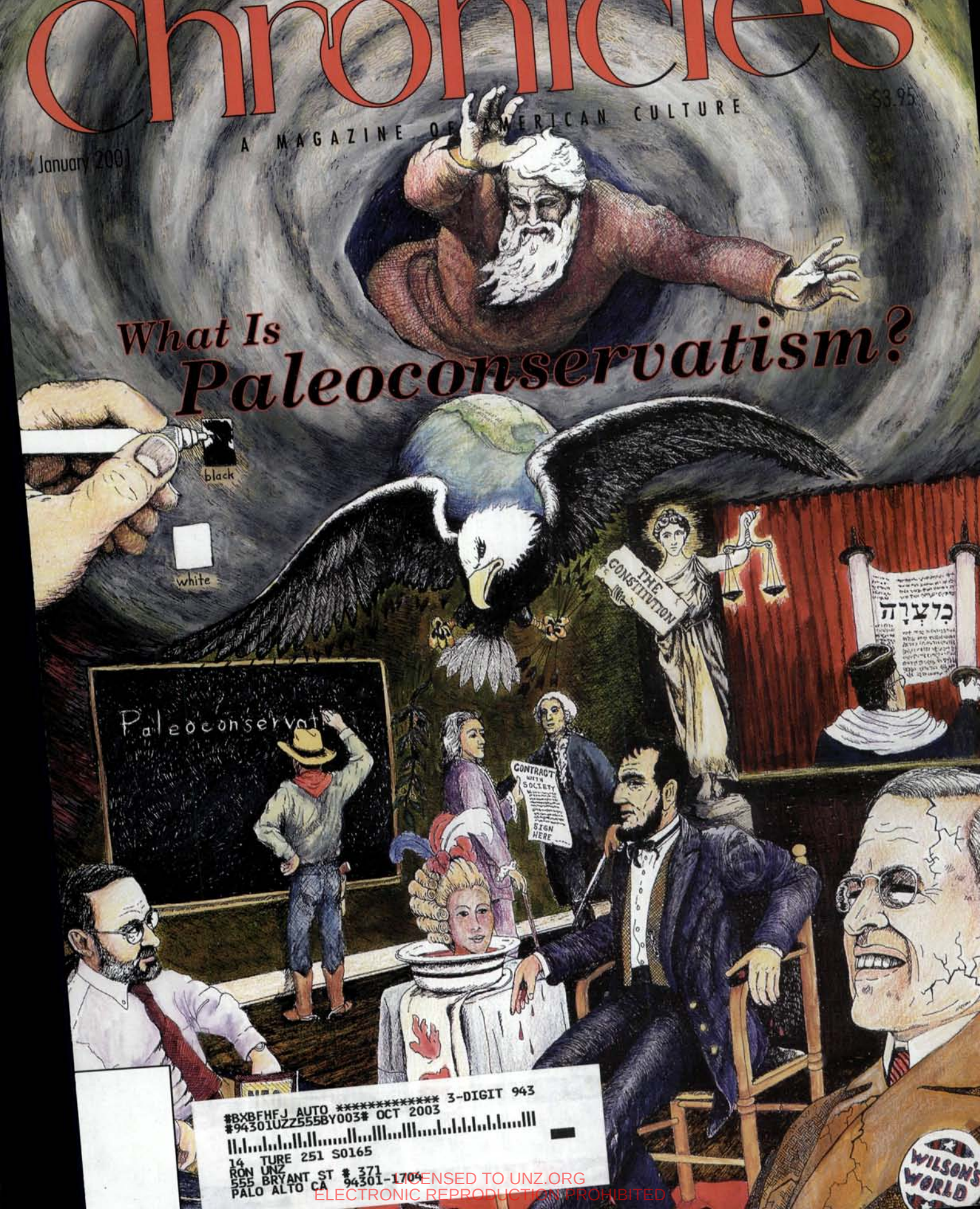
What Is Paleoconservatism?



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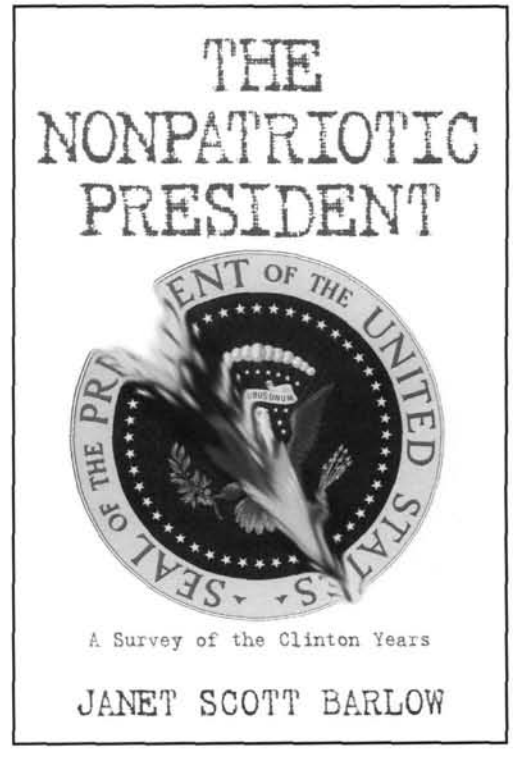

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PERSPECTIVE

Rediscovering Fire 10
by Thomas Fleming

The foundations of conservatism.

VIEWS

What Is Paleoconservatism?: A round table discussion 13
by Chilton Williamson, Jr., Paul Gottfried, Aaron D. Wolf, Donald Livingston, Scott P. Richert, Jacob Neusner, Harold O.J. Brown, Stephen B. Presser, Samuel Francis, and Srdja Trifkovic

OPINIONS

Raising a Flag for Mr. Davidson 27
by Randall Ivey

Mark Royden Winchell: *Where No Flag Flies: Donald Davidson and the Southern Resistance*

Redressing a literary grievance.

REVIEWS

James Bovard examines the corpse of the Constitution 30
in *"Feeling Your Pain": The Explosion and Abuse of Government Power in the Clinton-Gore Years*, writes **Clark Stooksbury** ◆ **Chilton Williamson, Jr.,** recommends *Privileged Moments: Encounters With Writers* by Jeffrey Meyers ◆ **J.O. Tate** finds Allen Tate's *Essays of Four Decades* a necessary corrective to modern error ◆ *The Encyclopedia of 20th-Century American Humor* by Alleen Pace Nilsen and Don Nilsen contains all the humor that's fit to print, marvels **Christie Davies** ◆

CORRESPONDENCE

Letter From Venice: The Visitors 37
by Andrei Navrozov

Letter From England: Blair's War on Biology 38
by Derek Turner

Letter From Wisconsin: Going Dutch 40
by Sean Scallon

Letter From Russia: When Will It Snow Again? 42
by Denis Petrov

Letter From Tennessee: Remembering 43
by Clark Stooksbury

VITAL SIGNS

GOVERNMENT: **Uncle Sam *Still* Wants You** 46
by Greg Kaza

The Road to Brussels 46
by Brian Kirkpatrick

EDUCATION: **School Days** 47
by B.K. Eakman

Can American Legal Education Be Fixed? 50
by Stephen B. Presser

CULTURE: ***Kulturklatsch* of the Wholly Global Empire** 53
by Marian Kester Coombs

DEPARTMENTS

POLEMICS & EXCHANGES 4

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS 7

SIGNS OF THE TIMES 25

LETTER FROM ROCKFORD 35
It Ain't Over 'Til It's Over
by Scott P. Richert

THE AMERICAN INTEREST 45
NATO, R.I.P.
by Srdja Trifkovic

IN THE DARK 55
Dancer in the Dark, The Contender, Best in Show
by George McCartney

THE HUNDREDTH MERIDIAN 57
A Happy Hunting Ground
by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

POETRY
The Steward and 18
Vulture Acres 33
by Timothy Murphy

ON THE COVER

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A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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On Reparations

Philip Jenkins is certainly right about the rising trajectory of demands for reparations for slavery ("For What We Have Done, and What We Have Failed to Do," *Vital Signs*, November 2000). I hope, but am doubtful, that he is also right about the potential of this gambit for exposing the root absurdity of liberal social policy. But there is more to be said about the subject, especially in regard to the idea of social debts created by history.

When I think of reparations, I always remember a conversation I had some years ago with a rather aggressive Germanic economist—let's call him Professor Z. This scholar declared that *he* did not owe any reparations for slavery because *his* family came from Europe after slavery was abolished.

Well, it occurred to me there was more to be said about his debt to American society. My forebears came from Europe in the early 18th century. They played a part, albeit a modest one, in the founding of one of the original 13 states and in fighting the Revolutionary War. Some of their kin helped settle the frontier. None of them owned any Africans, but like everybody else, they would have if they had not been too poor. They have taken part in every U.S. war; an uncle of mine was killed in the Battle of the Bulge, leaving a widow and orphan, and a great uncle was gassed in World War I.

If we are balancing the accounts of history, doesn't Professor Z owe a debt to those of us Americans whose ancestors made a perilous sea journey to create a free and prosperous country to receive the millions who came later? Why should he freely enjoy all the benefits of American history, but not bear any of the burdens, such as reparations for slavery? By his refusal of responsibility for slavery, Professor Z is the churlishly ungrateful beneficiary not only of my ancestors but of the labor of many generations of African-Americans who long preceded him on this continent.

Of course, the question of the involuntary bondage of Africans in British North America over the course of about two-and-a-half centuries is not likely to receive much light in the debate which Professor Jenkins anticipates, especially considering the politically corrected condition of the historical profession today. But let's look into forbidden territory.

Begin with a paradox: If there had been no slavery, then there would now be no African-Americans to make claims. Could the institution in that sense be regarded as a benefit? To what extent did the servitude of Africans in the United States exceed in severity the servitude of countless millions of mankind in every land and age, including the serf ancestors of many of us? Most certainly, without the forced journey of their ancestors to America, many present-day African-Americans would not exist, because their ancestors would have perished. And how do we weigh the debts for the relative advantage of the Africans who came to the English colonies and proliferated with those sent to Latin America, who were used up before they could leave offspring?

All sensible economic historians are aware that, although servitude is not an enviable condition, the slaves of antebellum America received some return on their labor. In fact, if honesty and reason played any part in our national dialogue, it would be easy to demonstrate from data and from European travelers that the slaves in general fared better in food, housing, health, and working hours than the urban poor of the Northern United States and Europe. In calculating reparations, how do we account for the portion of their labor that they were able to enjoy, or for their relative advantage over the miserable unenslaved poor of past centuries? And can we not subtract the billions spent on the war against poverty since the 1960's against what is owed for past sins? (Of course, most of that went to upper-middle-class liberals to administer welfare, which was its purpose all along.) I know the Constitution is as dead as reason and honesty in public life, but reparations to the living descendants of slaves would qualify as the creation of an order of nobility—that is, special benefits conferred by blood—which is strictly forbidden.

What the American government certainly does owe African-Americans for is the chaos, suffering, and reactive oppression created by their unplanned and violent emancipation in the wrong way (the greatest seizure of property, by far, in American history) and for the wrong rea-

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sons (vengeance on recalcitrant Southerners). But in order to assess that debt, Americans would have to reassess the myth that makes a ruthless imperialist-Darwinian war for national consolidation in the last century into a holy crusade. And that would be too painful.

—*Clyde Wilson*
Columbia, SC

Dr. Jenkins Responds:

So much of what Clyde Wilson says on the subject of racial reparations is so self-evidently correct that I fear I can offer only a pallid "polemic" of my own in return. Most of my own comments are of the sort that one might hear from a congregation encouraging a singularly effective preacher ("Tell it!" "Yes!").

His remarks are all the more critical since the reparations campaign continues to grow. Last November, *Harper's* offered a front-page symposium on the theme of "Making the Case for Racial Reparations." And if you want to see first-hand the sogginess of the arguments made in such endeavors, look no further than Elazar Barkan's recent book *The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices* (W.W. Norton). Barkan resolves the delicate issue of determining the factual basis of claims of historical victimization by the simple device of assuming that every single ostensible victim is truthful and accurate, if not omniscient.

Dr. Wilson's important point about the universality of serfdom or actual slavery can also be illustrated by a simple mathematical exercise. How many ancestors did you have one generation ago? Why, two, of course, namely your parents. Two generations back means four ancestors, three generations implies eight ancestors, and so on. Ten generations ago, you notionally had a thousand ancestors walking the earth at one time, while 30 generations back, you had no less than a billion. Tracing your family back the 60 generations to Roman times, you should in theory have been descended from some two-to-the-60th-power human beings, a number larger than the actual population of the planet. What this all means is that any given person of European descent can in theory be related to everyone who lived on that continent in ancient or medieval times, including the very substantial number of slaves and serfs who constituted so large a proportion of the European population up through early modern times. Recall that, for most of Eastern Europe, serfdom was only introduced in the late 16th century, when it was dying out in the West, and that, in various times and places, serfdom had the worst characteristics that we associate with African slavery in the New World. Even in the 17th century, Western Europeans faced the ever-present threat of kidnapping, enslavement, and forced conversion by Muslim coastal raiders. One way or another, we are all descended from people who were bought and sold, who were whipped and raped by their owners, who saw their children stolen and sold by their masters. If we believe in reparations for past misdeeds, at what point in time does the debt cease? Does the horizon of blood-guilt lie at 200 years, or five? Why?

Where I disagree with Dr. Wilson is in his remarks about the end of African-American slavery, about "the chaos, suffering, and reactive oppression created by their unplanned and violent emancipation in the wrong way . . . and for the wrong reasons." That emancipation and Reconstruction were carried out disastrously, no reasonable observer could doubt: Without such blunders and injustices, how could the very diverse and contentious white South of the 1860's have been transformed into the solid political bloc that prevailed throughout the first half of the 20th century? My only question is, what were the alternatives? The fact that slavery was so common in historical terms does not justify its existence, and I have no sympathy for any claims that Southern slavery was to the slightest degree redeemed by a sense of paternalism, nor is Dr. Wilson seeking to offer any such excuses. In the circumstances of 1865, I fail to see that any federal regime could have acted otherwise than ending the institution with all deliberate speed, as soon as that option fell within its power.

On Quebec Separatism

I appreciate the extraordinarily well-informed commentary by Sean Scallon on the current political scene in Canada ("CRAP Happens," *Correspondence*, October 2000). As I learned 20 years ago when I visited Quebec and met my French-Canadian wife, Anglo-Canadians are fond of pulling the wool over the eyes of Americans on the actual situation in Quebec.

The Meech Lake Accord, if acknowledged as passed, would have consigned separatism in Quebec to the same category of sentimental memory as the Jacobite movement in Scotland after the Forty-Five. The most controversial provision would have been a new clause in the Canadian constitution, proclaiming Quebec to be a distinct society. This clause would have legally affected the judicial interpretation of the Constitution Acts of 1867-1982, in effect giving Quebec special status in Canada.

The need for special protections for Quebec is obvious to anybody who understands the weaknesses of government by absolute majority and the need to protect the rights of the minority in any country and in any age by the mechanisms of fundamental law. The prime minister of the dominion, the premiers of all ten provinces, the governor general, and all enlightened Canadian statesmen in power in 1987 saw the urgent need for this provision.

The distinct-society clause and all other important provisions of the Meech Lake Accord were subject to Sections 38-39 of the Constitution Act of 1982, which means that they could have been passed within three years of proposal of the dominion parliament by the assent of seven provincial legislatures representing at least half of the population of Canada. This majority was easily obtained. However, the measure was deemed defeated, first, by misunderstanding Section 41 and completely ignoring Section 42 of the Constitution Act of 1982, not to mention critical rules of constitutional interpretation; and second, because of the intrigues of Pierre Elliot Trudeau, his political cronies, and his mistress, who pulled the strings from behind the scenes; and, third, the posturing of a fractious deputy in the provincial legislature in Manitoba, a marionette of Trudeau who used political correctness and the Cree Indians as his false pretexts.

Mr. Scallon did not mention the judgment of the Supreme Court of Canada in 1998, in effect an advisory opinion requested by the government of Canada. This judgment, which surprised the federal government in Ottawa, says that, while there is no formal right of secession, the right nevertheless exists as a practical matter and can be exercised upon referendum of the people on a clear vote in favor of a clear proposition for in-

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dependence. In such a case, the government of Canada has a constitutional duty to accommodate the people of Quebec in their wish. The judgment even says that, if the government of Canada fails in this duty, Quebec may proceed unilaterally to secede without further negotiations and without a constitutional amendment allowing the withdrawal.

Jean Chrétien's government has since passed the Clarity Act, which deliberately misrepresents the judgment of the Supreme Court as holding the very opposite of what it says. By innuendo, the act threatens Polish-style partition of the province, and possibly civil war, should Quebec attempt to secede without the consent of Anglo-Canada. Eminent lawyers and statesmen agree that the Clarity Act is unconstitutional and is simply the hysterical posturing of Anglo-Canadians using French-speaking scalawags in Ottawa to say to Quebec what they prefer not to say themselves. In fact, the Clarity Act would facilitate secession if the people of Quebec actually voted for independence.

What about the prospects of secession by Quebec? The judgment of the Supreme Court of Canada has essentially quenched the fires of separatism for the time being. The acknowledgment of the right of secession has actually stabilized Canada. The Parti Quebecois formed the government, yet it received fewer votes across the province in the last election than the Liberal Party. The opposition is led by an eloquent federalist, supported by one of the leading constitutional lawyers in Canada in his shadow cabinet. The Liberals of Quebec have done as much for the cause of independence and distinctness as the Parti Quebecois. The difference is only a matter of style and approach.

At the moment, secession would be very bad for Quebec, not because she cannot make it alone, but because the separatist party has been subverted by "intellectuals" who think that the French Revolution must have been good because it was French, and act accordingly. Thankfully, the right of secession, and other important features of legal order in Quebec, are based on the British constitution. The French in Quebec have always been very good at British parliamentary government.

Quebec should not, and probably will not, secede for the reason that a federal union is a thing of great value; it should never be jettisoned except for very urgent and just cause. Most people in Quebec believe that urgent and just cause for secession does not exist, certainly not at the moment. Only the purest political idiocy in Ottawa could create such a situation. The people of Quebec value the right of secession, not because they presently intend to use it, but because, as Lord Acton observed, it is useful as a constitutional shield.

Quebecois are too tradition-minded, too shrewd, too patient, too cunning, and too intelligent to tolerate a neo-Jacobin government. They vote like seasoned gamblers playing five-card draw or blackjack. They elected the Parti Quebecois to power last time only because they thought the Liberal government had been in power too long, which, viewed in light of sober objectivity, was correct. In fact, I am sure that the Parti Quebecois will be ousted in the next provincial election, as it should be.

Meanwhile, at the federal level, the best we can hope for in Ottawa is to clip Chrétien's wings by giving him a reduced majority, or else oblige him to form a coalition government with the Conservatives and the Alliance Party (which Mr. Scallon calls CRAP). Bad as Chrétien is, he cannot last forever; if we restrain him, he cannot do much harm before he is eventually shown the door to be replaced by his favorite, Bryan Tobin, or his enemy, Paul Martin. Joe Clark is the only party leader competent to be prime minister of Canada at the moment, but he will have his hands full in getting a few conservatives elected to parliament.

Mr. Scallon is right when he says that Jean Chrétien is simply awful. But he is awful in the sense that Stephen Douglas was in 1860. American history proves that it would have been better to have a president owned by railroads and financiers (as Douglas was) than a president who actually believed his own incondite ideology, as Abraham Lincoln did.

—John Remington Graham
St. Agapit, Quebec

On Paleo Principles

There is no way to put a price on the excellent work that you and your staff do for our cause. There are times that *Chronicles* seems like the only reason for one to retain his American citizenship.

I read that the Elian Gonzalez situation, and the strange reaction of conservatives to it, have caused you to want to spell out our principles more clearly. I'm glad. You and your organization did the right thing by favoring family and its importance over the relatively minor issue of where one child ends up living. I was astonished at how many "conservatives"—even people usually associated with the paleo point of view—were willing to create the new precedent of the government taking a child from his sole parent on the basis of some vague "right" to an American middle-class life. It was as if they learned nothing from the social decay of the past 40 years.

I'm also very impressed with your Summer School and the trips to Italy that you've made possible for readers of *Chronicles*. A friend recently pointed out that this shows the cultural depth of the paleos. He contrasted these offerings with *National Review*'s cruise, the main appeal of which is the opportunity to schmooze with Bill Buckley and company. This obvious difference had never occurred to me.

Good luck with the conference and with future plans. Soon, I will try to begin making a monthly donation to The Rockford Institute.

—Mary Emilio Stack
Brooklyn, NY

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THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION of 2000 is one of the great non-events of modern history. Paradoxically, it may have a powerful effect in waking people up to the reality of what we laughingly call our "democratic institutions."

So far from this election calling into question the "wisdom of the Founding Fathers," it proves they were right to set up safeguards against the very system we have now: mob rule in principle, the party state in practice.

Here is how American presidential elections were supposed to work. The Constitution makes no mention of political parties; it allows the several states to pick electors (and senators) according to any method they like; the electors were supposed to represent the best understanding of the communities that chose them—they were, in that sense, a representative body, not a set of puppets—and whoever received the highest number of their votes became president, while the runner-up became vice president. It was a delicate and intricate system of indirect election designed to frustrate both the ambitions of demagogues and the gullibility of the people. It might have worked, but step by step—beginning with the 12th Amendment (and the Jefferson-Burr electoral pact that partly inspired it) and culminating in the 17th Amendment mandating direct election of senators—wily politicians subverted republican government and made it, increasingly, the instrument of a rotating demagogic tyranny that is no less coercive for being more subtle than other forms of tyranny.

While all the pundits (including Hillary Clinton, who really was the best man in the New York Senate race—Rick Lazio could not even project the illusion of virility) are calling for elimination of the Electoral College and implementation of true democracy, wiser heads should be thinking about going back to square one. The best and simplest step that could be taken would be to repeal every constitutional amendment after the Bill of Rights and enact into federal and state laws any provisions (e.g., prohibition of slavery) that we found desirable.

Most Americans are beginning dimly to be aware that politicians do not simply rig elections in Rockford or Dallas or Chicago, that it is not simply the Voter News Service that may or not have engaged in hanky-panky, that it is not just the biased American media that tends to hand elections to the Democrats. No, what they are beginning to suspect is that the whole damn thing is fraudulent from beginning to end. And, allowing for a little exaggeration, they are probably right.

In the original republican America—America I, let us call it—the sense of the American people was carefully weighed and measured within the autonomous states that made up the union. In such a system, all the safeguards against mob rule and despotism made perfect sense: the sovereignty of the several states, indirect election of senators by state legislatures, property qualifications, literacy requirements, congressional districts weighted toward rural districts, exclusively male suffrage in the states, the Electoral College, and even the election of a president and vice president belonging to different factions or parties.

In the pseudo-democratic America created by the followers of Lincoln, Wilson, and the Roosevelts—America II, the sequel—the Rousseauian theory of majority rule and the General Will is supposed, in principle, to function, and the Electoral College is a mere anomaly. And, as critics of this election would say, irregularities in Florida and Wisconsin (and probably in every state) are vitiating this great democratic principle.

But what is the reality? In any recent presidential election, only about half of the citizens eligible to vote actually exercised their franchise. The winning candidate may receive a slim majority of the popular vote, or have to content himself with about 48 percent this time around, or even, in 1992, with the less than 40 percent received by Bill Clinton. No matter, of course, since the two parties have so rigged the system that all but two states award, on the basis of a bare majority, all their electoral votes to the candidate who receives the most votes. Thus the illusion of a popular mandate, the will of the people, and other propaganda phrases repeated *ad nauseam*.

Now, consider the influence of journalists, who are overwhelmingly anti-Christian leftists. Throw in the big-money lobbyists of both parties that buy them television time, and do not forget the fraud, chicanery, and corruption that have characterized every election of the past 150 years, and you will begin to get the picture that America is about as democratic as Rome in the age of Julius Caesar or the Philippines under Ferdinand Marcos and his successors. If any country ever needed election observers, it is the U.S.A.

Over the past 50 years, no one in his right mind believed that presidential elections expressed the mystical will of the people. This time around, either Bush or Gore will take the White House with the support of less than a fourth of the media-bewildered eligible voters they pandered to. Some Americans are waking up. They have learned something even from the potted history lessons on CNN; they have discovered that neither voting machines nor manual counting are without flaws. They have seen the spectacle of both parties getting into the gutter of the courts in an effort to twist the rules to their own advantage. And some—only some, mind you—are getting fed up.

We're not all brain-dead—not really all. And the next best thing to voting for a third party that free Americans can do is to choose not to vote for anyone at all. If more than 50 percent of them withheld their support from the (two-)party state—for any reason, good or ill—it would be more difficult for the party leaders to claim legitimacy. They would still rule us and

BOOK OF NEXT MONTH

Our book for next month is the Penguin Classics edition of Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*. This firsthand account of the descent of a state from a republic into an empire is the kind of history that Americans have never been able to write about their own country.

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milk us like the cattle we are, but they could not pretend that the cattle had actually sold themselves to the political herdsman. That is how revolutions begin.

Yes, as a good American and therefore a coward, I hope that Mr. Bush can take this election from Mr. Gore by any means fair or foul, but as a republican and a patriot, I would rather spend four years seething in hatred of an illegitimate government that forced me to repeat, every morning, that Tipper really is a charming lady of style and distinction than to lend my little particle of legitimacy—roughly one 200-millionth—to a regime that will always and only give us a choice between two undoubted evils.

—*Thomas Fleming*

STATES' RIGHTS suffered another blow last October, when President Clinton signed into law a $58-billion transportation bill. Tucked away amidst the election-year pork-barrel spending was a provision which, in effect, sets a nationwide drunk-driving standard. Under section 351 of the new law, state receipt of federal highway funds is made contingent upon adoption of a blood-alcohol content (BAC) intoxication standard of .08 percent. States that refuse to tailor their laws to Washington's liking will lose a portion of their federal highway funds—two percent in 2004, four percent in 2005, six percent in 2006, and eight percent in 2007.

Nineteen states and the District of Columbia already have .08 laws, and in Massachusetts, .08 is considered evidence but not proof of impairment. The other 31 states use .10 to define drunken driving. Mothers Against Drunk Drivers and other supporters of the new law estimate that 500 lives will be saved each year. Pointing out that the average BAC level for drunks involved in fatal crashes is .17, the restaurant and alcohol industries counter that a .08 level will penalize social drinkers and hurt small business. Lost in the bickering is the propriety of penalizing a sovereign state for crafting its own BAC standard. Drunk driving is a local criminal matter; therefore, BAC levels fall within a state's broad police powers—its reserved powers.

Unfortunately, this lack of respect for state sovereignty is hardly surprising. Prevailing Supreme Court precedent permits Congress to attach myriad strings to federal spending. In *South Dakota* v. *Dole* (1987), the Court upheld a congressional mandate directing the secretary of transportation to withhold highway funds from states with drinking ages under 21. Relying on cases from the New Deal, the Court reaffirmed that "the power of Congress to authorize expenditure of public moneys for public purposes is not limited by the direct grants of legislative power found in the Constitution." Congressional exercise of the spending power, continued the Court, is valid so long as it is for the general welfare, the conditions imposed are unambiguous, the conditions relate to national concerns, and the conditional grant does not run afoul of other constitutional provisions. In other words, there are no real limits on congressional spending. Vague concepts such as "general welfare" and "national concerns" are hardly restrictive.

Of course, the Constitution, despite the Supreme Court's exegesis, does impose limits on congressional spending. Article Eight, Section One permits Congress to tax and "to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States." Following this declaration is an enumeration of specific powers which would be rendered superfluous if "general welfare" was the standard. In his Virginia Resolutions, James Madison stated that the general-welfare language was "copied from the very limited grant of powers in the former articles of confederation" to ensure against misconstruction. "[I]t will scarcely be said," Madison continued in his Report of 1799, that this language was "ever understood to be either a general grant of power" or to permit the Confederation Congress to escape the Articles' enumeration of powers. Hence, the text and history of the Constitution belie any assertion of a spending power not connected to the enumerated powers.

For all the carping from the academy about a conservative Supreme Court, there clearly has been no conservation of the Constitution's limits on congressional spending. Congress spends as freely as the British parliament—a body claiming ultimate sovereignty and enjoying no real limits on its power. The nationwide .08 standard is but the latest example of the transformation of our system. While the United States has continued the form of a republic with divided legislative sovereignty, the reality is much different. If Congress can tamper with states' DUI laws, then we may safely declare that no local matter remains outside of Washington's reach.

—*William B. Watkins*

LEFT BEHIND: THE MOVIE is coming soon to a theater near you—maybe. Supporters of the multimillion-dollar evangelical end-times film are attempting to sponsor it in theaters across the nation. Released first on video in order to drum up support, the film stars Kirk Cameron, former teen heartthrob and star of ABC's *Growing Pains*. Just after the closing credits, Cameron pleads with fans of the novel-turned-movie to "pass out flyers, call your Christian bookstore, and volunteer to sponsor a screen in your local theater." We can judge the effectiveness of the grassroots movement on February 2, the projected opening night.

Left Behind is the first in an eight-book series, the most recent of which, *The Mark*, was released on November 14, 2000—an instant best-seller. The series is the latest example of the rapture genre that began with the publication of Hal Lindsey's *The Late, Great Planet Earth*, a novel that grossed more in sales than any other book during the 1970's.

Lindsey's novel gave rise to the (now cult-classic) series of evangelical films by Mark IV Productions: *A Thief in the Night*, *A Distant Thunder*, and *Image of the Beast*. Churches across the nation showed the films at youth retreats and "watch-night services"—New Year's Eve services at which congregations waited for a midnight rapture. Despite their dated production qualities—tortured camera angles, "waa"-laden guitar sound effects—the films were effective evangelism tools; altars were flooded with teens and adults hoping to escape the Antichrist's guillotine by accepting Jesus as their personal Savior before it was too late. Christian-rock pioneer Larry Norman crooned the Framptonesque theme song to *Thief* and the entire rapture movement: "There's no time to change your mind / The Son has come and you've been left behind / I wish we'd all been ready."

During the decade after the last Mark IV film, Jack Van Impe kept the rapture popular among evangelicals. Around that time, Timothy LaHaye was on an airplane when "I noticed a pilot flirting with a stewardess. He had a wedding ring and she didn't. I thought to myself, what if that man is having an affair and his wife is a Christian? What if the rapture happens and he is left behind?" That was the "seed" for the series, according to LaHaye, who had previously distinguished himself by coauthoring (with his wife, Beverly LaHaye, president of Concerned

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Women for America) the Christian love-making manual *The Act of Marriage*. With the approaching new millennium, the cultural mood in America (or at least among evangelicals) seemed ready for another rapture novel. In 1996, LaHaye drafted another writer, Jerry Jenkins, and began work on *Left Behind*. They could never have anticipated the phenomenal success their novel would enjoy.

The idea of "rapture" has been around for about 200 years, since John Nelson Darby, founder of the Plymouth Brethren in Dublin, worked out the eschatological system now known as dispensationalism. Americans once had tremendous confidence in the possibility that their new land would form the Kingdom of God on earth, a doctrine known as postmillennialism. Their Puritan forebears had described Boston as the New Jerusalem. By 1827 (when Darby began his work), a handful of Christians had begun to reread the prophecies of the Old Testament as literal prophecies for the nation of Israel rather than, as they had been interpreted for 1,800 years, as symbolic prophecies for the Church. (Of course, there was no nation of Israel at the time.)

All of history, these Christians taught, can be divided into various dispensations in which God offered somewhat different plans of salvation to select groups of people. Israel, during the dispensation of law, had been offered promises of land and an earthly kingdom, provided the people kept the law—chiefly through the temple cult in Jerusalem. The dispensation of law, however, had been interrupted by the dispensation of grace (or the Church, a "parenthesis" in the divine plan). Nonetheless, there still remained promises of the restoration of Israel and the coming of the Jewish Messiah. (He had come once, but they had rejected Him, so He'll come again when they're ready.) When Israel begins to show signs that she is ready for her Messiah (by returning to her historic lands and rebuilding the Temple of Solomon), Christ will put an end to the dispensation of grace by "rapturing" the Christians into the air, and they will wait in Heaven (during a seven-year tribulation) for Christ's return to earth. Those who are "left behind" will have to endure the reign of the Antichrist (who will arise out of the nations of Europe), a one-world government, a global economy, and worldwide war.

It took almost a hundred years for this narrowly literal and mildly heretical approach to the end of the world to catch on. Most church historians mark World War I as the point at which Americans turned from postmillennial optimism to the more pessimistic dispensationalist view. As early as the 1940's, belief in the rapture had been elevated to creedal status among evangelicals and fundamentalists—a sign that you believe in the inspiration of Scripture, because, after all, this is what the Scripture plainly teaches.

By the 1970's, as a result of the Cold War and support for Zionism in the United States and Britain, the sands had shifted so dramatically that many of the dispensationalist views seemed less farfetched. The nation of Israel had won two impossible wars; the United Nations and NATO seemed like possible vehicles for the Antichrist.

"Do you really intend to rebuild the temple?" asks a passionate Kirk Cameron (LaHaye's Buck Williams, a reporter for *GNN*). "It will be the greatest gesture of peace," replies Nicolae Carpathia, the United Nations secretary general and budding Antichrist. A stunned Buck trudges into a rest room at the United Nations and, having witnessed the fulfillment of the (obvious) prophecies of the Bible, accepts Jesus as his Savior—sort of.

"It's true—it's all true. God, I've never prayed before. I don't know what to say—please forgive me. I need you; and I believe. Just show me what to do." Buck's prayer sounds more like a profession of faith in the rapture than in the crucified Christ.

And that is the point. The cross of Christ is not central to evangelicalism today. The Lamb of God makes us feel better, gives us what we want, and sets a good example for us. The obsession with the rapture is just another in a series of distractions from the message of the forgiveness of sins. When that message is fully extinguished, then judgment will come; many within the visible Church are unwittingly contributing to that very effort. Perhaps the end really *is* near.

—*Aaron D. Wolf*

OBITER DICTA: Jeffrey Thomas Kuhner has accepted a position as assistant national-affairs editor at the *Washington Times*. We wish him and his wife well as they head southward.

Our new assistant editor is no stranger to these pages. A Rockford native, **Aaron D. Wolf** began his career at The Rockford Institute in April 1999, as the assistant to the vice president. He quickly became *Chronicles*' webmaster and coordinator of overseas conferences. His speech at the most recent John Randolph Club meeting, calling for an end to women's suffrage, convinced at least half of the women in the audience. A former student of *Chronicles*' religion editor **Harold O.J. Brown**, Mr. Wolf holds an M.A. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. With his wife, **Lorrie**, and son, **Augustine**, Mr. Wolf lives in Rockford.

As we've often noted, *Chronicles*' hometown of Rockford, Illinois, is celebrated by pollsters as one of most demographically average cities in the United States. Not surprisingly, then, our political, economic, and cultural trials reflect those of the country at large. That's the premise of *Letter From Rockford*, our new monthly column which precedes the *Correspondence* section. Written by our executive editor, **Scott P. Richert**, the column will focus on local issues that have national significance. It debuts this month with an update on—what else?—the Rockford school desegregation lawsuit.

This spring, join *Chronicles*' editor **Thomas Fleming** and his staff on the Emerald Isle for The Rockford Institute's third international Convivium. Spend four days at the splendid Hotel Davenport in Dublin and four days at the Cashel Palace Hotel resort in Cashel as we discuss "The Perennial Irish Nation." Tentative dates are May 20-28, 2001. Early registrants will receive deep discounts. For more details, call Institute Vice President **Christopher Check** at (815) 964-5811.

Timothy Murphy, our poet this month, hails from Fargo, North Dakota. *Set the Ploughshare Deep*, his memoir in prose and verse, was released in July by Ohio University Press. *The Deed of Gift* (Story Line Press, 1998) collected the poems of this farmer and venture capitalist. Including the two this month, *Chronicles* has published 21 of his poems since 1997.

Our art is provided by our art director, **H. Ward Sterett** of Roscoe, Illinois. Mr. Sterett received his B.F.A. from the University of Colorado and his M.F.A. from Northern Illinois University, and attended the L'Abri Fellowship, where he studied the effect of Christianity on art. He currently works as a sculptor, painter, and printmaker in Roscoe.

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H. Ward Sterett

Rediscovering Fire

by Thomas Fleming

What is paleoconservatism? The term seems to connect the American hard right with paleolithic anthropoids who wooed their women with clubs and ate raw meat because they were too stupid to discover fire. Even though Paul Gottfried and I are probably responsible for popularizing the term, I never adopted it, if only because it implies that we consider ourselves to be the true heirs of some earlier American right: either the largely imaginary Old Right of the 1930's and 40's or the anticommunist movement of the 1950's and 60's.

We have no quarrel with the conservatives who defined themselves by their opposition to communism, but whatever their virtues might have been, those defenders of the New Deal *status quo* have little to say to people of the year 2000. Instead of aiming at the cultural and political transformation of the United States, postwar conservatives and libertarians were content with forming a movement (or movements).

Movements are characteristically American and symptomatic of a people who take their beliefs from *Reader's Digest* articles and executive summaries. As a Hollywood scriptwriter might put it, we are a "high concept" nation that will not feed its mind on anything that has not been already chewed and twice digested in our bovine stomachs and finally turned into the cud of sound bites and slogans. Left or right, Republican or Democrat, we are babies that must be spoon-fed our political pabulum. If leftist Democrats can only talk of "compassion" and "caring" and the "richest one percent of the population," mainstream Republican conservatives display a talent for reducing every issue to sentences like "I thought America was all about opportunity," or "We're a nation of immigrants," or (and you will hear this from hard-eyed tycoons and think-tank executives who believe in nothing) "Say, this is still about the greatest country that has ever existed in the history of the world."

I am far from criticizing plutocratic conservatives who have turned their base-metal credo into the gold of wealth and power. It is the members of the more sophisticated "traditionalist" right who have made nothing with their affected drawls, Victorian mannerisms, and obsession with imperial Vienna and Franco's Spain. Compared with their rivals, traditionalists and reactionaries are mere children. Content to spend their time writing unscholarly articles in unrefereed journals, posing for pictures with their Carlist berets, Confederate flags, and "I Like Ike" buttons, lovingly poring over their complete sets of *Triumph* and *National Review*, they will pose little threat to the regime they think they are opposing. If there is any future for the American right (and I say this with equal parts amusement and incredulity), it lies in the hands of the odd birds who call themselves (or are called by others) "paleoconservatives."

As the word implies, paleoconservatism is rooted in ancient and permanent principles of human nature. No one invented marriage, the family, or the maternal love upon which the survival of our species depends. To be human is to live in families where senior men make the crucial decisions and where the household is autonomous and self-governing in all its own affairs: the rearing and education of children, the provision of assistance for elderly and infirm members, disciplinary measures for those who violate the family's laws. After hundreds of thousands of years of social and political evolution, the ancient (Greek, Roman, Jewish) and medieval family retained most of its primitive authority and responsibility, and the first step of any conservative movement should be the liberation of families and households from the power of the total state.

Social conservatives and some members of the Christian right have made similar pronouncements, but always with an obeisance to the left. "The state has harmed the family," they say, "so

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now let the state make reparations by passing pro-family legislation"; or "Let us restore family values but not with the crushing burden of patriarchy and inequality that disfigured earlier regimes: We have learned something, after all, in 2,000 years."

What have we learned? Not to mind our own business? Not to accept responsibility for ourselves and our families? Scientific and economic progress does not entail moral or political progress. The opposite is more often the case. Paleoconservatism does not offer a nostalgic appeal to the golden age of the 50's—either the 1950's A.D. or the 450's B.C.—but an insistence upon the permanent things that have been under attack for centuries and the memory of which is being obliterated in our time.

In calling for a restoration of manhood and womanhood and family autonomy, we are not so naive as to believe that some think tank can draw up a package of magical legislation of taxes and incentives that will restore American social life. On the contrary, we know that things will probably get much worse before the first steps can be taken toward restoration. But having an ideal in mind, we also know that we must oppose any social legislation, whether it comes from far-left Democrats or center-left Republicans, that does not shift power and wealth away from government and toward families and local communities.

This approach is both practical and principled, and its practitioners are not likely to be taken in by Potemkin-village projects that go by the name of "revenue sharing" or "the new federalism" or "school choice." If voucher plans will increase the power of the federal government over private schools, we oppose them, along with national legislation restricting divorce and defining life. When we have a Christian country, it will be time enough to consider expanding the social authority of the state.

The family is not the only natural social institution that is being undermined by the modern state. Men are by nature competitive, and they created war and games, politics and the marketplace, to satisfy their need to contend for status, wealth, and power. One of leftism's greatest successes has been to adopt the social language of Christianity and to transfer it from enclosed households to the open fields where men do battle with each other.

A simple definition of socialism is the pretense that the nation is a family or a village, where everyone takes care of everyone else. Socialism, whether it takes the form of Social Security or welfare payments or aid to higher education, not only undermines the authority of the family but obscures the whole point of competition, which cannot be defined as the struggle for money and power but as the pursuit of excellence.

The declared goal of socialist societies is to spread a minimum level of mediocrity (e.g., of affluence, free time, education, beauty, virtue) as broadly as possible throughout the population, while the goal of any honorable society is to foster the pursuit of excellence by individuals and within communities. Judged in socialist terms, America falls dismally short of social justice, but judged by the standards of sixth century B.C. Greece, medieval Pisa, or 19th-century Europe and America, we are a nation of savages. In the life of the mind, where the pursuit of excellence has all but disappeared, the socialist approach has reduced our colleges and universities to assembly-line factories that turn out sensitive, nonjudgmental, anti-intellectuals, the worst of whom are hired to keep the machinery running.

Private property and the free market are essential to any nation's health, and both are being eliminated by big government and the state-capitalist *internationale* that is quickly assuming total control over the global economy. Paleoconservatives may disagree over the merits of free trade, but anyone calling himself a paleoconservative or "paleolibertarian" who does not unequivocally oppose NAFTA, GATT, and the WTO is either dimwitted or duplicitous. These acronyms represent global organs of trade control and world government.

Competition and family solidarity are the dynamic forces that generate human society. The theory of equality (and the politics of envy which it generates) is fatal to both of them. In the real state of nature, as opposed to the destructive myth put forward by philosophers out to destroy the social order, women defer to men, children to parents, young to mature, strangers to natives, low-status natives to high-status natives.

Traditional conservatives were instinctively revolted by egalitarianism, but they were often deluded into ascribing mysterious virtues to the upper classes. Unfortunately, ruling elites—whether they are 18th-century aristocrats or 19th-century plutocrats—are often as stupid and futile as the French Bourbons, who saddled their country with a centralized bureaucracy, waged aggressive and destructive wars for the sake of making aesthetic improvements to their cartographic hexagon, and sold out Christendom to the Turks. The mere fact that conservatives acknowledged the importance of status and hierarchy should not have blinded them to the shortcomings of the American ruling class. At least since the 1870's, the upper echelons of the American elite have been manned by venal and unprincipled fixers who made their money not so much by building better mousetraps as by fixing government. From Jim Fisk and Jay Gould to Armand Hammer to Michael Milken and Ross Perot, our ruling class has thrived on the manipulation of government.

Paleoconservatives stand staunchly in defense of free markets and free enterprise and oppose every attempt made by the central government to control the market. We know that those who write the regulations control the market, even if those regulations are theoretically on the side of business and free enterprise. The reality is that regulations on business or programs designed to support agriculture impose disproportionately heavy burdens on small entrepreneurs and producers and confer correspondingly richer benefits to the monopolists.

Agribusiness was created by government; and chain stores and megabanks benefit from regulations and court decisions that have struck down the rights of states and local communities to regulate their own economic affairs. The way to liberate the economy from the monopolists is not through any government policy but this: Strip all three branches of the national government of the power to regulate all business, manufacturing, and agriculture that takes place outside the District of Columbia. Then, if the people of Peoria are ready to eat real spaghetti at Luigi's and bank with their neighbors, they will have the power to shape their economic destiny. If they prefer the microwaved, garlic-powdered plastic at the Olive Garden (a corporate chain that funds the infanticide lobby and represents all that is wrong in America), then they will have the life they deserve.

Many traditional conservatives have opposed the free market, because in their hearts they believe that Marx and Engels were right, that capitalists have dissolved every bond between man and man except the cash nexus. But Marx was wrong. It was not businessmen who made the revolution that began the destruction of England and America but political liberals, the direct ancestors of the Tony Blair/Al Gore leftists who want to create a global government that will finish the job.

In cozying up to fascist and authoritarian regimes, traditional

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conservatives betrayed their fundamental ignorance of the nature both of a legitimate commonwealth and of the modern state. The commonwealth can only create conditions that are propitious for the good life; it cannot compel good books to be written or moral lives to be led. That was the wisdom of St. Thomas, and it is a pity that his teachings have been distorted.

It is not any traditional social order but the modern state that makes the claim to create beauty and enforce virtue. Those of us who have to live with the results ought to know better than ever to entrust any government with such power again. Rebuilding Christendom will take far more work than the restoration of Rome to its condition in the age of Constantine (the goal of many a Renaissance humanist), but it will not be done by any government. No government (or series of individuals) created civilization in its variety of forms. Civilization was made by a society informed by a classical sense of beauty and a Christian vision of life. Restoration of that sense and that vision is the task—apparently impossible—that lies before us.

But the impossible is accomplished all the time by men and women who believe that they are working on the side of destiny. When liberals were destroying civilization, they were smugly confident that they had not only right but the future on their side. Looking at their handiwork, liberals today are finding it ever more difficult to keep their chin up. If they do, that jutting chin makes a perfect target for the punch we are going to have to deliver.

The pundits say America lacks leadership, but we have had enough leaders and gurus—particularly foreign gurus—to take over a fair-sized solar system. What America needs is not a few leaders but a substantial class of clearheaded and resolute men who refuse to give way to despair and who take no pleasure in histrionic boasts and threats; men with an Irish imagination and Germanic discipline; men who, when they go into battle, do not stop to swat the flies swarming over the enemy corpses. If revolutions (including cultural revolutions) are usually fought by masses in the streets, they are always led by a disciplined elite class. Three hundred Spartans held off the barbarians at Thermopylae; a few thousand Athenians at Marathon drove the barbarians back to their ships; and a mere 300,000 rightists, if their minds and characters were properly formed, would drive these modern barbarians—anti-Western Christophobes—out of the universities and back to whatever planet they came from.

Center-leftists will undoubtedly jeer at this image, saying it sounds more like a poem by G.K. Chesterton than a plan of action, "and Chesterton, you know, was an antisemite." But policies and programs must be based on unchanging principles, if policies are to be anything but plans to change the spark plugs of a car going 120 m.p.h. the wrong way down the interstate.

What I have tried to do is to sketch out a few of the necessary foundations of any conservative movement: the glorious differences between men and women and between all people; free enterprise and free competition for excellence and success; the necessity of social hierarchy; the very limited sphere of government in the regulation of both economy and culture; an appreciation of the createdness of the things of this world and of their resistance to tinkering; the necessity of faith. This is not an ideology, much less a program, and I am putting myself forward as the next guru who will free conservatives from the necessity of thinking.

C

DICTATIONS

"Mandate for Leadership"

Your servant Humpty has been hearing a great deal about the "will of the people" and an incoming President's need for a "popular mandate." Richard Nixon was the first president I recall claiming to have received a "mandate" as a result of the trouncing he administered to George McGovern, but it was Ronald Reagan who used the concept of a "mandate" to override congressional opposition to his programs.

The word comes ultimately from the Latin *mandare*, which means both to entrust and to give instructions amounting to an order. A *mandamus*, for example, was a writ from the king's bench commanding a person to do whatever he is told. In law, a mandate is typically the instructions given by a higher to an inferior authority, e.g., an order from sovereign to subject.

For thus the royal mandate ran
When first the human race began,
"The social friendly, honest man,
Whate'er he be
'Tis he fulfills great Nature's plan,
And none but he."

After World War I, the League of Nations parceled out Germany's and Turkey's empires into "mandates" to be administered by the so-called "advanced nations." The translation is supplied by Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*: "In practice 'advanced nations' meant the victorious powers." It still does. Whenever the U.N.-NATO-E.U. begins bragging about democratic human rights, it's time to hide out in the bomb cellar.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the political use of "mandate," as a blank check for an administration's policies, comes by way of the French, the masters in the art of democratic lying. In this "elegant diction," a mandate from the people compels the government to do whatever it is that a popular majority is inclined to do. Presidents and prime ministers are merely servants of the popular will, and if it is the will of the people to nationalize church property or compel other people's children to attend government schools, then what can the poor politicians do but comply with their masters' commands?

A "mandate," then, is an expression of the sovereign will of the people who lend their authority to a regime's political program. It is, in other words, the superstitious mumbo-jumbo of Rousseau's General Will, the political manna that can justify any abuse of law, custom, morality, or constitutional order. A president with a mandate is not merely one dummy chosen out of a nation of 270 million dummies. With the support of, say, 26 percent of eligible voters, he is dumbness incarnate with a power to ruin the lives of his fellow citizens that Caesar or Cromwell could only dream of.

—Humpty Dumpty

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A Round Table Discussion

WHAT IS PALEOCONSERVATISM?

As a movement, paleoconservatism may be only 15 years old, but the principles that it embraces are timeless and enduring. In the following essays (longer versions of which will be collected in a book later this year), Chronicles' *editors explain what paleoconservatives are fighting against, and what we stand for.*

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What Is Paleoconservatism?

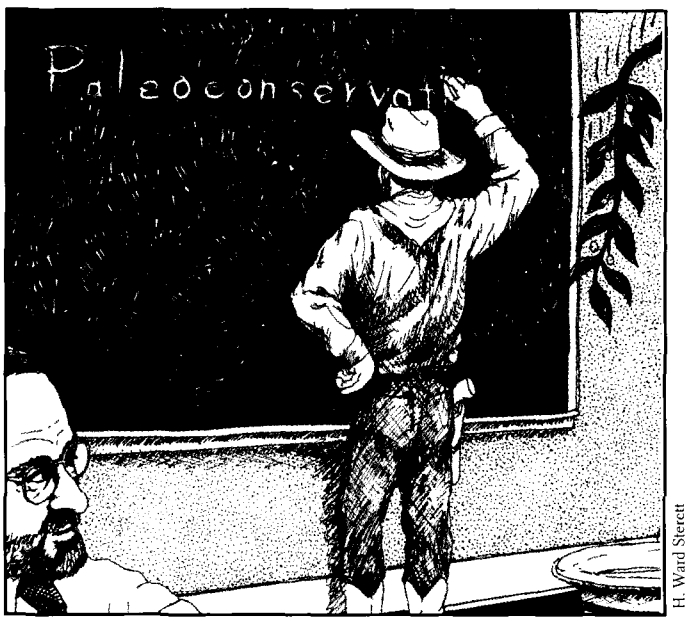
Man, Know Thyself!

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Paleoconservatism is the expression of rootedness: a sense of place and of history, a sense of self derived from forebears, kin, and culture—an *identity* that is both collective and personal. This identity is missing from the psychological and emotional makeup of leftists of every stripe—including "neoconservatives"—and is now disavowed by mainline conservatives of the Republican variety, seemingly bent on eradicating as much of the primeval stain as they can from their consciousnesses while apologizing for the faint discoloration that remains.

Identity—like patriotism and loyalty, among other things—is a problem for conservatives to the extent they see it at odds with the concept of Economic Man, for whom the term has no significance unless preceded by the word "brand." For the left, the only valid human identity is economic status, which determines one's political position in the context of the class war: Other identities (racial, ethnic, tribal, cultural, religious, national) are dangerous because they distract from all-important economic distinctions, and because they create enmity among groups who the dialectic has determined should be allies. The left, which (with the help of drugs and other deviant social behavior) in the 80's created the crisis of homelessness, is and always has been homeless itself: men and women without a country, without a people, without a history—without God. But there is another reason why the left, especially in societies that retain so much as a vestige of their historic character, despises traditional identities. For leftists, these imply something enticing yet, for them, unattainable: a self-possession to be envied, a self-confidence to be resented, an assurance to be feared. What they perceive is not simply a threat to their political blueprint, to their vision of the future. It is an affront to themselves: their bogus identity, their false self-perception, their absurdly inflated sense of their own strength, most of which they owe to the bureaucratic institutions that protect their soft ineffectual selves the way a nautilus shelters a snail. This sense of affrontedness has produced a satanic hatred which, for the past 40 years, has been fueling a kind of public conspiracy—entirely unprecedented in the annals of history—whose end is the total deconstruction of a civilization by the elite responsible for its welfare and survival.

In this campaign of chaos and destruction, the chief and most effective tools have been the weakening of the Christian religion and Christian institutions, the promotion of multiculturalism—and virtually uncontrolled immigration from the Third World. Given their strong sense of identification with the American Republic as well as, in many cases, family trees rooted in the fertile abundant soil of colonial America, it was inevitable that it should have been the paleoconservatives who sounded the alarm over immigration and carried the anti-immigration battle to the enemy, whose response (entirely in character for it) has been name-calling from a safe distance rather than hand-to-hand fighting in the field, plus redoubled bureaucratic and propagandistic efforts beyond the sidelines. Given, also, the distraction of the general population by sports, sex, the internet, and a booming economy, the paleos seem to be losing most of the battles, *and* the war. The numbers of first-generation immigrants are approaching critical mass, while a Gallup poll taken during the last election season showed that a majority of Americans no longer believes that immigration to their country ought to be curtailed.



H. Ward Sterett

Such being the case, what should the paleoconservative response be? (Not the paleoconservative *political* response—there aren't any genuine paleoconservatives in positions of real power—but the public, as well as the private, one.) My answers are either practically inutile, or else useful only in the long run. These are: pray; wait ("Catastrophe," Ed Abbey thought, "is our only hope"); carry on as if nothing were happening; *be strong*.

Last fall, I received an academic calendar from my alma mater, The Trinity School in New York City. Having not paid a visit to 139 West 91st Street since my 20th reunion in 1985, I paged, astounded, through glossy four-color photographs depicting scenes from the daily life of the school. Gone were the awe-inspiring faculty, serious but not necessarily severe men in tweeds, dark suits, and rimless spectacles. Gone were the ranks of schoolboys uniformed in navy blue blazers, button-down shirts, striped ties, and oxfords (shoe-shine inspection promptly at 8:45 before Chapel, and an ear-tweak for the boy who'd forgotten to add his display handkerchief before leaving home that morning). Gone the straight rows of tablet armchairs, the

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Chilton Williamson, Jr., is the senior editor for books at Chronicles.

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teacher's imposing desk, the youth in the corner holding his chair out in front of him by its hind legs and blubbering (the Trinity of my day wouldn't have included *him* in a calendar, either). In their place were teachers dressed like college kids, coatless and tieless; students garbed as junior versions of their instructors; casual arrangements of tables to form mini-classrooms promoting fuzziness in feeling and in thought. In addition to the Episcopal service (Trinity, founded in 1709, was originally the scholastic appendage of Trinity Church on Wall Street), there are now Jewish Chapel and Kwanza Chapel. The school, which shuts down for Rosh Hashanah and Kwanza as well as for Christmas and Easter, Martin Luther King, Jr., Day as well as Winter Vacation, etc., is apparently closed more than it is open to accommodate the sensibilities of a multicultural student body. The school went coed shortly after my graduation, and the incidence of non-Western faces has since greatly increased.

Flexibility in facing the vicissitudes of life is one thing, unlearning your upbringing another—a thing principled people wouldn't do even if they could. Trinity School, having educated generations of students for life in the Old America, has—for the past 30 years—been cooperating enthusiastically in the work of destroying that America and displacing those it once trained to operate and inhabit it. All right: We are becoming strangers in our own country.

What to do? In addition to the foregoing list, I add several further suggestions. Be true to your forebears, and to the culture they created and—for nearly four centuries—sustained. Wear a coat and necktie in polite society, even on an airplane. *Speak out*! Make yourself heard as loud and as strong as your lungs, and the co-opted press and electronic frequencies, permit. Keep your sense of humor, ALWAYS. . . . Go to Church. c

Distrusting John Locke

by Paul Gottfried

John Locke has been interpreted in various ways that appeal to conservatives—e.g., as a Christian, albeit a materialist and anti-Trinitarian, or as a qualified defender of private property—but there is a general drift to his thought that should offend traditionalists. His view of human beings as thinking matter without the capacity for innate ideas, his unmistakable faith in sexual egalitarianism, and his constructivist theory of civil society are all fundamentally anti-conservative. The point is not whether any of these positions is theoretically defensible but whether conservatives (or historically minded classical liberals) should want to identify themselves as Lockeans. The clear answer is no.

It is simply untrue that those loyal to the foundations of the American polity must be devotees of Locke. While some passages in the Declaration of Independence were adapted from Locke's *Second Treatise*, George Carey, Forrest McDonald, and M.E. Bradford have all made two self-evident points: Most of the Declaration consists of a bill of grievances that came out of English parliamentary tradition but not necessarily Locke's writings; and the founding political document of the American nation was the Constitution, not the Declaration. In any case, as shown exhaustively by McDonald, the Framers, in constructing the federal union, drew on such a multitude of ancient and modern authors that it would be difficult to award Locke pride of place among their sources.

One of the sources for the Constitution was Scottish philosopher David Hume, to whose achievements Donald Livingston has devoted two erudite books. According to Livingston, Hume's conception of the social good as grounded in custom and tradition was partly a reaction to the fiction of Locke's social contract. In the "Original Contract" and other essays, Hume expressed astonishment that a serious thinker could believe that

H. Ward Sterett

individuals left a "state of nature" and entered civil society by way of a contract. Hume wondered how one could build a political theory on a situation that neither he nor his acquaintances had ever encountered. He was also amused by the notion of "natural right," a concept of entitlement that was supposed to be natural and inborn but which most of the human race knew nothing of. If natural right should seem axiomatic, Hume asked, why did individuals throughout the world live "in subordination to each other" without a sense of being deprived of rights? Hume was not defending oppression but insisting that subjects of a limited monarchy should note their historical blessings and advantageous customs instead of inventing bogus rights and chimerical states of nature.

But Lockean contractualism has graver flaws than its bizarre anthropology. It is not coincidental that socialist John Rawls and mainstream welfare statists find it appealing. Although Locke treats property as a natural right that civil society might be required to defend, his defense of property *per se* was rather qualified. As the closing sections of the *Second Treatise* and the scholarship of Richard Ashcraft indicate, Locke was an embattled advocate of "the People" when it set out to overthrow tyranny and

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establish popular government. A tension, in fact, exists between Locke's rights to life, liberty, and property and the majoritarian democracy that he evokes in his political pamphlets. As Ashcraft suggests, this tension can be resolved as easily in the direction of democratic collectivism, based on presumed individual consent, as it can by affirming the inviolability of property.

In the world of possessive individualism conceived by this late 17th-century Whig pamphleteer, the state comes into existence to ensure the individual's right to material gratification. If the people see fit, the Lockean regime can achieve its purpose as plausibly by redistributing earnings and handing out entitlements as it can by protecting entrepreneurial profit. It can also enforce claims beyond the ones Locke fancied, if the majority comes to consider such claims as natural rights. Why limit rights to the short list Locke drew up when he was trying to dislodge the Stuart monarchs? It makes good Lockean sense to have the modern state guarantee claims that are more relevant today: e.g., a right to self-esteem or protection against insensitive white males, who don't seem to mind being jerked around by the thought police. There is no Lockean requirement that rulers uphold natural rights in the form in which they existed before the rise of civil society. "Rights" mean what the majority takes to be a tolerable understanding of them on the part of those who rule. On this point, the late Willmoore Kendall, on the populist right, and John Rawls and Richard Ashcraft, on the socialist left, have interpreted Locke quite accurately.

Locke's contributions to political theory can still be read with profit, particularly his strictures on the limits of political covenants. His critical observations concerning Robert Filmer's defense of divine-right monarchy in the *First Treatise on Civil Government* make a brilliant polemic, even if Locke often misrepresents his opponent. But Locke's contractualism is a slippery slope which leads to the political culture that dominates us; the connections between the two are too obvious to be missed. On balance, I agree with the thoughtful counterrevolutionary Joseph de Maistre, who both admired and feared Locke's imaginative energies: "*L'æ début du discernement c'est le méfi de Jean Locke.*" c

Jacobins—and Jacobins

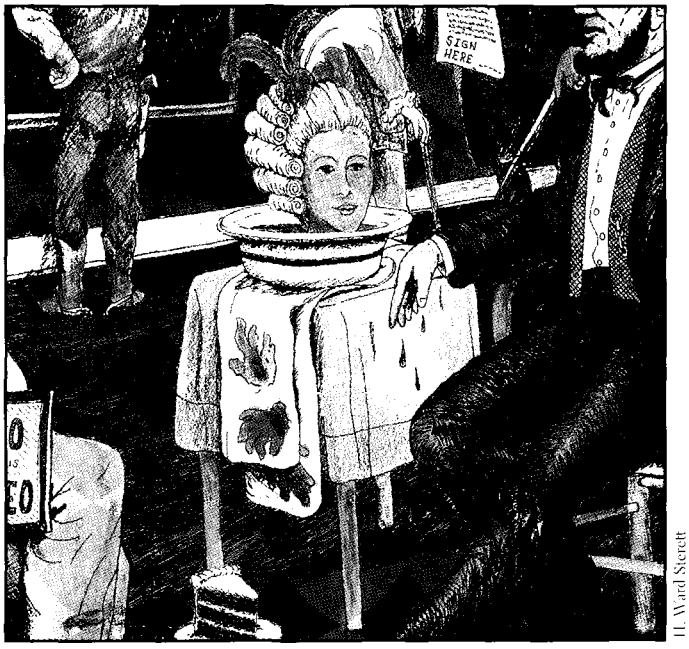
"Ye Are of Your Father, the Devil"

by Aaron D. Wolf

At the dawn of the 21st century, few of today's public (or private) school students would argue with you if you told them that the United States of America was founded upon the principle, proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence, that "all men are created equal." They would offer no argument, perhaps, except that they thought that statement was in the Constitution, not the Declaration.

If Alan Keyes, considered by many conservatives to be their paragon, were teaching your son's history class, he would encourage this particular confusion, precisely because the platform of his "Declaration Foundation" states that the Constitution is properly interpreted through the lens of the Declaration. For the average American, conservative or liberal, that makes sense. However, for the tiny remnant still familiar with the debates surrounding our republic's founding, that makes as much sense as saying that the Torah can only properly be seen through the lens of Elijah's rants before the prophets of Baal.

How exactly do we read the Constitution objectively in the light of our greatest propaganda document, the Declaration of Independence, without reading in our own interests? There are those who believe that the federal government should exert absolute control over every abortion because our nation was founded upon the principle of the "right to life." There are also those who believe that the federal government should exert absolute control over abortion, guaranteeing its safety, legality, and frequency, because our nation was founded upon a "right to the pursuit of happiness." Christian conservatives remind everyone that the Founding Fathers claimed it was none other than God Who endowed us with those rights. Liberals then



H. Ward Sterett

counter with the odd notion of "separation of Church and State" allegedly held by those same Founding Fathers.

When we observe this and other facets of our quadrennial national conversation, we are witnessing the triumph of Jacobinism in America. The threefold principle of the French Revolution—"liberty, equality, and fraternity"—has been beaten into the consciousness of Americans for so long that it has polluted the entire pond of American politics and culture. Neither the "liberal" Democrats nor the "compassionate" conservatives

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have escaped the poison.

Unlike the French and Communist Revolutions, American Jacobinism has yet to degenerate into its own large-scale reign of terror—although the Branch Davidians might disagree. On the contrary, we never seem to hear the end of our success story—the booming economy, continually falling crime and illegitimacy rates, our children's improving test scores. It is still difficult for us to imagine U.S. tanks rolling down the streets and over dissenters in Chicago or Detroit, despite their presence in Yugoslavia or Iraq. What accounts for the steady success of Jacobinism in America, in light of its violent rise and decline in the rest of the world?

The frog-in-the-kettle analogy may be the answer. Rather than employing the guillotine or the Red Army, for a century and a half, our ruling elite brought the country to a slow simmer through a steady process of centralization, while preserving the illusions of progress, prosperity, and moral decency. Each time the slow slouch toward Robespierre has progressed, it has done so draped in the language of traditional religion and Christianity. Lincoln excused the slaughter of a generation of Southern men by appealing to the myth that our one nation "under God" was originally "dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." FDR, in his 1933 inaugural address, paved the way for the Jacobin New Deal program of Social Security with the following statement: "The money changers have fled from their high seats in the temple of our civilization. We may now restore that temple to the ancient truths. The measure of the restoration lies in the extent to which we apply social values more noble than mere monetary profit." In the 2000 presidential election, one candidate appealed to "John 16:3" while the other claimed Jesus was his favorite philosopher.

In the cases of Lincoln and Roosevelt, there were valiant opposition movements. Now that the two ruling parties have merged in the "center," the paleoconservatives have emerged as the lone voice of resistance against bipartisan Jacobinism. None within the movement is naive enough to assume that his dissension will bring about a second American revolution that can reclaim the tradition of English common law and American constitutionalism (let alone Western Christendom) that was once the birthright of the people. But each convert is one more who will die proudly in the Colosseum, rather than sit in the stands and cheer.

Paleoconservatism is the last remaining barrier in America that successfully blocks a few unsuspecting *viators* on the path to the Terror. It does so by insisting with reactionary confidence that students of the past can see meaning for the present and hope for their own future, not through the lens of an enlightened *philosophe* or his *Book of Virtues*, but through the illumination of Scripture and tradition, as embodied in the greatest works of our now languishing civilization. The more that we celebrate theologians, painters, and poets, the more such Jacobin abstractions as "liberty, equality, and fraternity," "bridge to the 21st Century," and "a thousand points of light," seem vacuous. Only those who are outside the paleoconservative ark will allow themselves to be enslaved by false confidence in the insipid sentiments of politicians and parties who flatter themselves with adjectives such as "compassionate." The truth, indeed, does set one free. c

The Litmus Test for American Conservatism

by Donald W. Livingston

Abraham Lincoln is thought of by many as not only the greatest American statesman but as a great conservative. He was neither. Understanding this is a necessary condition for any genuinely American conservatism. When Lincoln took office, the American polity was regarded as a compact between sovereign states which had created a central government as their agent, hedging it in by a doctrine of enumerated powers. Since the compact between the states was voluntary, secession was considered an option by public leaders in every section of the Union during the antebellum period. Given this tradition—deeply rooted in the Declaration of Independence—a great statesman in 1860 would have negotiated a settlement with the disaffected states, even if it meant the withdrawal of some from the Union. But Lincoln refused even to accept Confederate commissioners, much less negotiate with them. Most of the Union could have been kept together. Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas voted to remain in the Union even after the Confederacy was formed; they reversed themselves only when Lincoln decided on a war of coer-

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H. Ward Sterett

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cion. A great statesman does not seduce his people into a needless war; he keeps them out of it.

When the Soviet Union dissolved by peaceful secession, it was only 70 years old—the same age as the United States when it dissolved in 1860. Did Gorbachev fail as a statesman *because* he negotiated a peaceful dissolution of the U.S.S.R.? Likewise, if all states west of the Mississippi were to secede tomorrow, would we praise, as a great statesman, a president who refused to negotiate and launched total war against the civilian population merely to preserve the Union? The number of Southerners who died as a result of Lincoln's invasion was greater than the total of *all* Americans killed by Hitler and Tojo. By the end of the war, nearly one half of the white male population of military age was either dead or mutilated. No country in World War II suffered casualties of that magnitude.

Not only would Lincoln not receive Confederate commissioners, he refused, for three crucial months, to call Congress. Alone, he illegally raised money, illegally raised troops, and started the war. To crush Northern opposition, he suspended the writ of *habeas corpus* for the duration of the war and rounded up some 20,000 political prisoners. (Mussolini arrested some 12,000 but convicted only 1,624.) When the chief justice of the Supreme Court declared the suspension blatantly unconstitutional and ordered the prisoners released, Lincoln ordered *his* arrest. This American Caesar shut down over 300 newspapers, arrested editors, and smashed presses. He broke up state legislatures; arrested Democratic candidates who urged an armistice; and used the military to elect Republicans (including himself, in 1864, by a margin of around 38,000 popular votes). He illegally created a "state" in West Virginia and imported a large army of foreign mercenaries. B.H. Liddell Hart traces the origin of modern total war to Lincoln's decision to direct war against the civilian population. Sherman acknowledged that, by the rules of war taught at West Point, he was guilty of war crimes punishable by death. But who was to enforce those rules?

These actions are justified by nationalist historians as the energetic and extraordinary efforts of a great helmsman rising to the painful duty of preserving an indivisible Union. But Lincoln had inherited no such Union from the Framers. Rather, like Bismarck, he *created* one with a policy of blood and iron. What we call the "Civil War" was in fact America's French Revolution, and Lincoln was the first Jacobin president. He claimed legitimacy for his actions with a "conservative" rhetoric, rooted in an historically false theory of the Constitution which held that the states had never been sovereign. The Union created the states, he said, not the states the Union. In time, this corrupt and corrupting doctrine would suck nearly every reserved power of the states into the central government. Lincoln seared into the American mind an ideological style of politics which, through a sort of alchemy, transmuted a federative "union" of states into a French revolutionary "nation" launched on an unending global mission of achieving equality. Lincoln's corrupt constitutionalism and his ideological style of politics have, over time, led to the hollowing out of traditional American society and the obscene concentration of power in the central government that the Constitution was explicitly designed to prevent.

A genuinely *American* conservatism, then, must adopt the project of preserving and restoring the decentralized federative polity of the Framers rooted in state and local sovereignty. The central government has no constitutional authority to do most of what it does today. The first question posed by an authentic American conservative politics is not whether a policy is good or bad, but what agency (the states or the central government—*if either*) has the authority to enact it. This is the principle of subsidiarity: that as much as possible should be done by the smallest political unit.

The Democratic and Republican parties are Lincolnian parties. Neither honestly questions the limits of federal authority to do this or that. In 1861, the central government broke free from what Jefferson called "the chains of the Constitution," and we have, consequently, inherited a fractured historical memory. There are now *two* Americanisms: pre-Lincolnian and post-Lincolnian. The latter is Jacobinism by other means. Only the former can lay claim to being the primordial American conservatism. c

The Steward

by Timothy Murphy

Lord, thou deliveredst unto me
five talents; behold, I have gained
five talents more.
—*Matthew* XXV, 20

Pheasants and sharptail grouse
nest near his modest house.
Pronghorn antelope
graze on a Rosebud slope.

Morris no-till drills
pulled by three Versatiles
keep the soil from blowing
off his communal hills—

hills that the bison haunted
and his Sioux forbears hunted,
fields where the cocks are crowing
and his green sons, growing.

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Mr. Wilson's Wars

Devolution or Revolution?

by Scott P. Richert

"National aspirations must be respected; peoples may now be dominated and governed only by their own consent. 'Self-determination' is not a mere phrase. It is an imperative principle of action, which statesmen will henceforth ignore at their peril."

Woodrow Wilson's words, recorded in the *New York Times* on February 12, 1918, defined the 20th century and guaranteed that World War I would not be the "war to end all wars"; they provide an important gloss to his Fourteen Points, delivered in joint session of Congress just a month earlier. As Winston Churchill would later write, the idea of national self-determination was neither original nor new but "will rightly be forever connected with the name of President Wilson."

The phrase still resonates today, perhaps not least among those of us who believe in the organic nation and who desire to govern ourselves. Of course, states are also the product of history, but while the construction "nation-state" may roll easily off the tongue, we tend to see a tension between the first element and the second. Because of the centralization of power in America over the past 140 years, we may find ourselves more kindly disposed toward the claims of the nation, hoping that they will help keep the power of government in check. But by adopting the language of national self-determination, the state has successfully co-opted national identity for its own centralizing purposes. As Lord Acton wrote in July 1862 (reflecting on the American Civil War), "Whenever a single definite object is made the supreme end of the State, be it the advantage of a class, the safety or the power of the country, or the support of any speculative idea, the State becomes for the time inevitably absolute."

Since 1789, the twin principles of revolution and national self-determination have marched forward with an almost demonic intensity, before which the actions of men and of states have seemed powerless. A half-century before Woodrow Wilson proclaimed national self-determination the highest political good, Lord Acton predicted the great political dynamic of the 20th century:

> [A] nation inspired by the democratic idea cannot with consistency allow a part of itself to belong to a foreign State, or the whole to be divided into several native States. The theory of nationality therefore proceeds from both the principles which divide the political world—from legitimacy, which ignores its claims, and from the revolution, which assumes them; and for the same reason it is the chief weapon of the last against the first.

If national self-determination is the chief weapon of revolution against legitimacy, then we can rightly say that Wilson and his successors have institutionalized revolution. Until we abandon the Wilsonian ideal, we can expect a future of continual war. Every time national populations spill over the boundaries between nation-states, national self-determination demands that we change those boundaries so that the nation and the state become coextensive once again. We have seen this dynamic begin to play out in Kosovo, under the force of American weapons; we may see—sooner rather than later—the same happen in the American Southwest.

H. Ward Sterett

Wilson concluded his speech to Congress by defining America's role as that of the world's policeman, ensuring the right of self-determination to all nations:

> Unless this principle be made its foundation no part of the structure of international justice can stand. The people of the United States could act upon no other principle; and to the vindication of this principle they are ready to devote their lives, their honor, and everything they possess. The moral climax of this the culminating and final war for human liberty has come, and they are ready to put their own strength, their own highest purpose, their own integrity and devotion to the test.

But the doctrine of national self-determination is dangerous not only because it binds us to endless foreign interventionism, but because it strengthens the central state here at home, while frustrating the patriotic—rather than national—aspirations of regions and states for self-government. After decades of unfettered immigration throughout the West, various nationalisms—particularly Mexican nationalism in the American Southwest—are competing for power within the boundaries of historic nation-states. By denying, on the basis of a Jacobin idea of national unity, the legitimate patriotic aspirations of regions and states to govern themselves, the partisans of national self-determination legitimize the very principle under which the invaders hope to annex parts of our country to a foreign nation-state.

The ordered liberty of historic states is under constant attack. Globalism and the New World Order represent just one pincer of that assault; the other pincer—the institutionalization of the revolutionary principle of national self-determination—may represent a greater threat, because it strikes where we least expect it—from within.

c

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The Old Testament Foundations of Cultural Conservatism

by Jacob Neusner

The Hebrew Scriptures of ancient Israel (a.k.a. the Old Testament) are frequently quarried for proof-texts—pretexts, really—for leftist politics. In prophetic calls for justice, liberal Christianity and liberal Judaism claim ample support to legitimize big-government intervention into every area of life, and "Justice, justice pursue" is broadly interpreted as a divine endorsement of the platform of the Democratic Party. But the use of Scripture by the left to claim that God concurs with government solutions to the crisis *du jour* does not intimidate those of us on the right who value Scripture as well.

The difference lies in the context in which Scripture is invoked. Leftward-leaning exegesis finds verses that say what the exegete wants to hear; ripped out of cultural context, any verse can mean whatever you want to make of it. But divine revelation, taken whole and in context, shapes a culture of remarkably conservative qualities: continuity, tradition, and respect for received truth, for example. Indeed, it is no accident that those who value Scripture as God's Word, not just good advice, derive from it the lesson that the new should be measured by the standard of the true, and truth derives from principle, reason, and the logic of history.

The social order that Scripture seeks to construct out of ancient Israel builds upon ancient foundations: the very creation of the world. The law of the Torah conveys God's plan for the world He made. What could offer a more conservative conception of culture than the view, expressed by the ancient sages of Judaism in Genesis Rabbah (their commentary on the book of Genesis) that God looked into the Torah for guidance in creating the world? It follows that the law of the Torah may be interpreted diversely but never dismissed as ephemeral. Here is a sublime expression of this profoundly conservative philosophy of culture, rooted in God's plan and will for creation:

> "In the beginning God created" (Gen. 1:1):
>
> R. Oshaia commenced [discourse by citing the following verse:] "Then I was beside him like a little child, and I was daily his delight [rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world, and delighting in the sons of men]" (Prov. 8:30-31).
>
> [In the cited verse] the Torah speaks, "I was the work-plan of the Holy One, blessed be he."
>
> In the accepted practice of the world, when a mortal king builds a palace, he does not build it out of his own head, but he follows a work-plan.
>
> And [the one who supplies] the work-plan does not build out of his own head, but he has designs and diagrams, so as to know how to situate the rooms and the doorways.
>
> Thus the Holy One, blessed be he, consulted the Torah when he created the world.
>
> So the Torah stated, "By means of 'the beginning' [that is to say, the Torah] did God create . . . " (Gen. 1:1).
>
> And the word for "beginning" refers only to the Torah, as Scripture says, "The Lord made me as the beginning of his way" (Prov. 8:22).

H. Ward Sterett

Here is an explicit claim that the social order set forth by the Torah, with its emphasis on the critical role of the family in the formation of that order, is the foundation of civilization. Furthermore, Scripture is clear that capital punishment forms part of justice. The Talmud explicitly states that it is a means of atoning for sin, so that the felon may also inherit the world to come and eternal life at the resurrection of the dead. And to take a third component of the conservative philosophy of the social order—the preference for decentralized decisionmaking—Scripture offers devolution as the pinnacle of wisdom when Jethro advises his son-in-law, Moses, to provide for local decisions and to address only the most difficult matters himself. Hence, in matters of philosophy, Scripture read in context sustains conservative, and rejects disruptive, policies. It is only when interpreted out of context that Scripture can be read to oppose capital punishment, support non-natural "families," and uphold the destruction of local communities through the centralization of power. c

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Christianity and the Legitimacy of Government

by Harold O.J. Brown

The late Paul J. Tillich (1886-1965)—not exactly a hero to conservative Christians, Protestant or Catholic—spoke of the rival impulses that cause agony in personal and community decisionmaking, which he defined as the clash between autonomy and heteronomy. In autonomy—literally, "self-law"—individuals think of themselves as a law unto themselves; in heteronomy, "other-law," they see themselves as subject to alien rule. The solution to this tension, according to Tillich, is theonomy, "God-law." It is easy to affirm this advice in principle, on the personal level, at least for the Christian, because, as Jesus said, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

The problem arises at the social level. "Theonomy" has become the slogan for a small group of theologians called reconstructionists, who believe that it is the duty of Christians to create a social order that will install and enforce the biblical law of the Old Testament. This principle has not worked all that well even when it has been energetically tried, as in the English Republic under Oliver Cromwell, or in Puritan New England. For the Christian, the proper motive for obedience is love. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Unfortunately, such being the human condition, this principle does not work very well even in the Christian community, and it cannot be expected to prevail among the general public. This is the basic reason why society requires government.

At its foundation, the new North American republic was what Jacques Maritain called "descriptively Christian." Biblical principles were enshrined in many institutions and were frequently cited in court decisions, so that we may properly say that a measure of attention was paid to theonomy. However, the concept of theocracy, or, more practically, rule by the Church, was not even considered. The principle of a national church was rejected in the First Amendment, which was later applied to the states.

Even if it had not been prohibited by the U.S. Constitution, the concept of theocracy would have been nearly inconceivable in the United States from the beginning and is even less conceivable today, in a society that has become pluralistic and multicultural and where there is latent prejudice against religion in general and Christianity in particular. It is evident, and recognized by both Protestants and Roman Catholics, that *duplex in homine regimen*—the government of man is two-fold. There are small Christian communities which regard civil government as the worldly realm that "lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19). During the Vietnam War, a few disillusioned Christians actually advocated anarchy. Nevertheless, for virtually all Christians, there is a "necessity and sanction for civil government."

The question for Christians today is not whether but what: What should we think about the relationship between the secular and the spiritual, or more specifically, what spiritual principles should be kept in mind as we attempt to carry out our civic duty in constituting and maintaining civil government? Paul's Epistle to the Romans offers guidance, and chapter 13 stresses the legitimacy and the limits of government power: "The powers that be are ordained of God," and "he [the ruler] is a minister of God to thee for good" (verses 1, 4). While government, all government, has a principle of legitimacy, a government can become illegitimate when it ceases to reward good and punish evil; therefore, under extreme circumstances, resistance, even armed revolt, can be approved. In the context, Calvin requires that revolt be determined by the "lesser magistrates"—in other words, by people who already have a measure of divinely approved authority. This principle was followed successfully in the American War of Independence, which was a revolt of the colonial authorities, not of the people, and unsuccessfully in the German officers' revolt against Hitler. In both cases, people who already possessed authority and responsibility determined that the supreme authority was flawed or, in Hitler's case, demonic. Government is therefore legitimate but limited: It cannot command what God forbids, nor forbid what God commands (see Daniel 3:1-18, 6:6-11; Acts 4:19, 5:29), and it must not invert its mandate and begin to punish good and reward evil.

H. Ward Sterett

Christians are not expected to establish a theocracy or an officially Christian government, although Christians from A.D. 300 have done so, sometimes with more, sometimes with less success. What Christians can expect of any state, and especially of a state in which they are the numerical majority, is suggested by Paul's warning in Romans 1:21, where he says of the pagans of his day, "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful." The consequences he says, were that they "became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (verses 21, 22). Under the instructions of our most eminent and highest court, the United States government has increasingly forbidden public acknowledgement and expressions of gratitude toward God, and we experience the prophesied consequence in growing governmental folly—for example, in the exaltation of abortion, "gay rights," and even homosexual "marriage." Perhaps if a future government again determines to give God at least a measure of formal honor and thankfulness, we may learn not to treat folly as wisdom, darkness as light.

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Law, Morality, and Religion

by Stephen B. Presser

A paleoconservative thinks about the law the way Edmund Burke did. The basis of all law is the will of God or, to use the term employed by Blackstone (another hero of paleoconservatives), "natural law." According to natural law as understood by Blackstone, Burke, and our late 18th-century American Founding Fathers (as paleoconservatives can still call them), God endowed man with certain rights and responsibilities, and among these was a right to life, a right to liberty, and a right to property, all to be exercised in a manner consistent with what has come to be called Judeo-Christian morality. Law, for Blackstone and Burke and the American Framers, was not about self-actualization (as it is for liberals and libertarians today) but about responsibly fulfilling one's duties to God, country, and one's fellow citizens and family. In Burke's England, the basis of the legal system was tradition and prescription, and, in particular, a carefully and aristocratically ordered society. For Burke, the English Constitution, as a result of the Glorious Revolution and presumably through divine intervention and the ascendancy of the Protestant religion, had achieved the goal of political science first sought by the Greeks, namely, a balanced and mixed constitution in which monarchy, aristocracy, and the people all worked together to achieve prosperity and harmony. The monarch was able to provide energy in the defense of the realm without slipping into tyranny because he was checked by an independent and hereditary House of Lords bred to wisdom and responsibility and a House of Commons reflecting the spirit, industry, and honesty of the English people. In other words, the English system managed to combine democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy without the ancient attendant evils of anarchy, oligarchy, or tyranny, because each of the three great social orders balanced the others.

An American paleoconservative, as devoted to tradition as was Burke, is hard-wired to be an anglophile and is perhaps not completely convinced that the break with England was wise. Nevertheless, he understands that the American Framers believed that the English system had become corrupted through rotten boroughs, the machinations of unscrupulous operators in Parliament, and an inattentive monarch, and that the government of the United States had to be based not on monarchy and aristocracy, but on the sovereignty of the people and the states. Still, he believes that the English attempt at a balanced constitution reflected a universal truth, that governmental powers had to be checked by other powers if tyranny or corruption were to be avoided. The paleoconservative cherishes the American solution, borrowed from another paleoconservative hero, Montesquieu, of separation of governmental powers. In the 13 new American republics, and eventually in the United States Constitution, the animating notion was that the sacred rights of life, liberty, and property could best be preserved by making sure that only legislators legislated, that judges were faithful to the rules laid down by the common law and by the legislatures, and that the executives, in the words of the federal Constitution, took care that the laws were faithfully executed. The American paleoconservative also understands that there was a second set of checks and balances secured by the American principle of federalism, of allocating powers and responsibilities between two different governments, the state and the federal.

H. Ward Stereft

The paleoconservative believes that the federal government is one of limited and enumerated powers and that, as the Tenth Amendment provides, the powers not given to the federal government are reserved to the states, or to the people themselves. The paleoconservative believes that the achievement of the American Founding Fathers, as Benjamin Franklin thought, was guided by the hand of God; accordingly, the paleoconservative is an originalist, a believer that the Constitution and laws have a fixed meaning, as they were originally understood. That is why he is horrified by the theory popular in today's courts and legal academy, that the Constitution is a "living document" which is putty in the hands of a judiciary bent on imposing its particular version of social policy on a quarter of a billion Americans. The paleoconservative is equally alarmed by legislatures that seem cowed by overweening executives, and by a federal government that, in all three branches, has usurped the primacy in domestic policy that was supposed to belong to the states. He is dismayed by both state and federal courts and legislatures who have forgotten the primacy of property rights, along with the basic rights to life and liberty. He laments the politics of the focus group and the loss of the Framers' Burkean knowledge that tradition, established institutions, and prudence ought to restrain temporary popular excess. The paleoconservative believes, as the Framers did, that there can be no order without law, no law without morality, and no morality without religion. He understands that the redistributive efforts of the last 60 years undermine nothing less than the rule of law itself. He is mortified by Supreme Court doctrines that have eviscerated the powers of the states and have swept religion from the public square. He prays for the restoration of the original understanding of the Constitution, the laws, and of human and divine nature.

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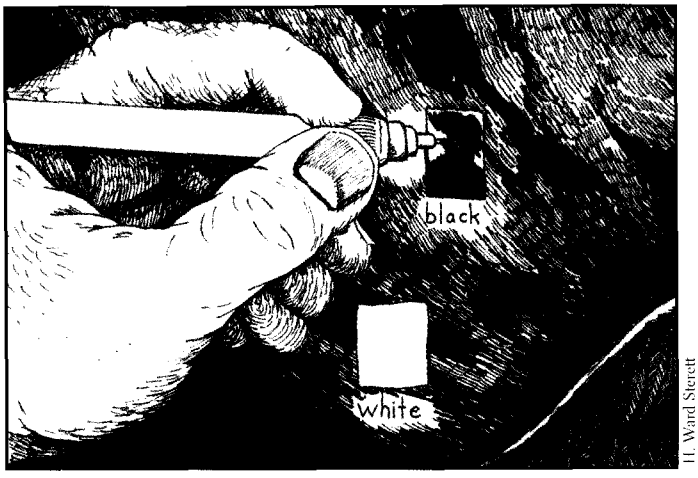
Paleoconservatism and Race

by Samuel Francis

Several years ago, while still at the *Washington Times*, I published a column on the occasion of the appearance of *The Bell Curve* in which I wrote,

> What you think the state ought to do about race has little to do with what you think about race. It has everything to do with what you think about the state. Under the properly limited federal government with which this country started out and to which it should return, the state would be unable to do very much at all about race. In the modern leviathan created by liberals, where smoking, sexual beliefs and guns are approved targets of federal meat-grinding, there's no limit to what the state might do about race or those whose IQs it doesn't approve.



H. Ward Sterett

These sentiments, as harmless as they are, probably did me no good, but they are nevertheless a fair and concise summary of what most paleoconservatives believe, or ought to believe, about race and the state. Paleoconservatism, strictly understood, has nothing to say about the natural phenomenon of race or the relationship of race and social environment, any more than it has anything to say about the heliocentric theory of the solar system, the doctrine of transubstantiation, or the authorship of the plays of Shakespeare. Most paleos whom I know tend to believe, insofar as they think about the matter at all, that the hereditarian view of race is scientifically correct, but it is quite possible for paleocons to believe (as I think the late Robert Nisbet, a great paleoconservative, did believe) that race is purely a "social construct" and that behavioral and psychological differences between the races are due to social-environmental causes.

Paleoconservatism does have something to say about what the state—especially the federal government in the American cultural and constitutional setting—should and should not do, and in what we may somewhat laughingly call paleoconservative "doctrine," there is no reason whatsoever for the federal government to do anything at all about race—any more than it should do anything at all about sex, religion, class, neighborhood, or family. As one of the foremost paleoconservative theorists, Don Vito Corleone, used to say, "Even the King of Italy didn't dare to meddle with the relationship of husband and wife."

Throughout American history, race—through the crusades against slavery, lynchings, and segregation or today's war against "hate"—has provided the occasion for the expansion of the central state and its destructive intrusion into social relationships, and the current endless "war against racial discrimination" by the federal leviathan and its allies—through the civil-rights statutes of the 1960's, forced busing and school integration, affirmative action, "hate crimes" legislation, the encouragement of virtually unlimited Third World immigration, "teaching tolerance" and multiculturalism, and President Clinton's ill-advised sermonizing on "racial reconciliation" a few years ago—is actually a central part of the managed destruction of such relationships of civil society as property, patterns of association, education, and employment.

The managerial ruling class, lodged primarily in the state and the other massive bureaucratic structures that dominate the economy and mass culture, must undermine such institutions of traditional social life if its power and interests are to prevail. Disparities between races—rebaptized as "prejudice," "discrimination," "white supremacy," and "hate" to which state and local governments and private institutions are indifferent or in which they are allegedly complicit—provide constant targets of convenience for managerial attack on local, private, and social relationships. Seen in this perspective, as a means of subverting traditional society and enhancing the dominance of a new elite and its own social forms, the crusade for racial "liberation" is not distinctly different from other phases of the same conflict that involve attacks on the family, community, class, and religion.

The managerial attack on traditional race relations has coincided with an equally world-historical process that Nisbet called the "racial revolution," the replacement by "color" of "nationality and economic class as the major setting for revolutionary thrust, strategy, tactics, and also philosophy." The racial consciousness of the nonwhite peoples has been used by the new class as part of its broader war on traditional social structures and relationships. Today, it is increasingly unclear which wing of the revolutionary assault is dominant, the managerial or the racial, or whether the racial consciousness that has so far served managerial purposes will remain subservient to those purposes as the racial composition of the nation, if not of the ruling class itself, continues to darken.

Paleoconservatives may differ among themselves as to the real meaning of race and the ultimate resolution of racial conflicts or even as to whether there is or can be any such resolution, but they should be able to agree, at a minimum, that if the historic character of the American nation is to survive, the exploitation of race as a political weapon by the ruling class must end. Hence, common paleoconservative goals should include (1) a long-term moratorium on all immigration, (2) the withdrawal of the federal government from involvement in all racial

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issues, and (3) the repeal of all federal laws and court decisions (including the civil-rights laws of the 1960's and the rulings of the Warren Court) that authorize such involvement. Whatever "discriminations" and racial and ethnic identities that state and local governments and individuals and groups of different races and ethnic categories at the private and social level may wish to practice, the federal government should remain entirely "color-blind" or "race-neutral," in much the same way as it maintains neutrality among different religions, classes, or communities. What paleoconservatives think about race and the state is that the state has no more proper role in designing relations among the races than it has in designing relations between Calvinists and Catholics, Copernicans and Ptolemaics, or Stratfordians and Oxfordians. c

Let the Counterrevolution Begin

by Srdja Trifkovic

Two centuries after de Maistre, we still encounter Frenchmen, Italians, and Russians; as for "man," we have yet to come across him anywhere. Nations still survive, in spite of the attempts of dictatorial "Western" ruling elites to destroy them, and families, and all other communities bonded by kinship, language, faith, and myth.

Those elites are united in their burning desire to deny human nature and destroy Christianity. They champion an ideology of universal human values, of a global culture. They will not rest until America has been redefined as a "proposition" and the rest of the world engineered into a global "imperium" based on "democracy," "human rights," and "open markets."

The globalist project attempts to destroy self-government at home and national sovereignty abroad. In both cases, the rule of law is replaced by some higher good, a "principle" that can never provide a basis for either legality or morality, and which is uprooted from time or place. By treating America as an ideological proposition rather than a real nation, globalists at least cannot be accused of partiality when they treat other nations as minions to be cowed or savages to be exterminated.

This is why the study of foreign affairs matters, now probably more than ever. America cannot be fully de-Americanized as long as there is a single nation that refuses to eat Big Macs, watch *Seinfeld*, or deliver its citizens to some U.N.-run kangaroo court. And the world cannot be completely globalized as long as there is some meaningful resistance in the United States itself, based on the notion of America as a real nation, a distinct people with shared civilizational and religious roots.

This nation has definable interests which ought to be the foundation of our relations with other nations, through the observance of the Golden Rule. American foreign policy should pursue those interests. But we do not need to reinvent the wheel: Most Americans still prefer enlightened nationalism—"Peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations; entangling alliances with none"—to "benevolent global hegemony." Their healthy antipathy to the ruling elites' imperial pretensions is a sign of hope: The moral absolutism that the proponents of global hegemony substitute for rational argument can be challenged.

To those who scream "something must be done" whenever CNN flashes pictures of refugees on our TV screens, we should respond that genuine dilemmas about our responsibility toward one another cannot justify the zeal of those who love humanity so much that they hate all real people. This is not escapist isolationism. Some wars may have to be fought, but only those that bear on our security and interests. Reality is always more complex than we think; the more distant it is from our own experience, the less we can understand it. We should be aware of our limitations, of our inability to know what is best. This is both Christian and an authentically American point of view.

H. Ward Sterett

In short, the objective of American foreign policy should be to maintain the security and freedom of the United States, while not threatening the security and freedom of other countries. Enlightened nationalism does not seek dragons to slay in far-flung corners of the world, but it demands the readiness "of the coiled rattlesnake that threatens none so long as it is not threatened and its domain is not intruded upon." It rejects both neo-Wilsonian one-world globalism and neoconservative hegemonist interventionism—the twin brothers that run America's current foreign-policy establishment—as contrary to the authentic traditions of the American republic, to its true interests, and to the will of the American people.

A clearly stated case for a "nationalist" foreign policy may enable even those Americans who do not subscribe to paleoconservatism to ponder the implications of global interventionism—for their own sake, and for the sake of peace in the world. Without any such alternative, Americans may continue to sink into undissenting submission as their country nudges ever closer to an eventual war with China or a possible nuclear conflict over Central Asia.

A frontal assault on American imperialism may trigger a long-overdue counterrevolution at home. The new "imperium" demands docile and pliant subjects rather than responsible citizens capable of making moral distinctions. By rising against America's neoimperialism, Americans will save their country, while saving the world from the United States. c

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"All the News Unfit to Print"

Signs of the Times

Vol. 3 No. 1 January 2001

"Target: America," screamed the headlines following last October's attack on the U.S.S. *Cole* in Aden. The nation was supposedly outraged. But Joe Sobran gave us a more accurate reading. "Nobody really cared," he wrote; ordinary Americans know perfectly well that they weren't the targets:

> A warship, allegedly "their" warship, was. They are vague about why their "defense" forces are scattered all over the globe, but they understand that it's none of their business, really. These foreign policy decisions are made by committees of experts in some Washington office, prattling of "U.S. interests," meaning their own. The rest of us aren't invited to sit in on the meetings. In a democracy, the people are allowed to vote. They have no say in running an empire.

Bill Clinton promptly vowed revenge, but—as Sobran pointed out—the thing about private, unauthorized violence is that we don't know whom to retaliate against:

> There are no fleets of Arab destroyers off the coast of Florida, no Chinese fleets off San Diego . . . The only enemies we have are the enemies our government continues to make for us, particularly by meddling in the Middle East. Countless people are "anti-American" in the sense that they don't want to be ruled or bullied by this country and its allies and clients; but they aren't anti-American in the sense that they would wish us ill, let alone try to hurt us, if we minded our own business.

Which is exactly what the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, a think-tank with close ties to the U.S. government, does not do. On October 18, CSIS issued a draft report in which Palestinian leaders were urged to forget about human rights when acting against opponents of the "peace process" (*www.csis.org/stratassessment/reports/IsraelPalestine.pdf*):

> [T]here will be no future peace, or stable peace process, if the Palestinian security forces do not act ruthlessly and effectively . . . They must halt civil violence even if this sometimes means using excessive force by the standards of Western police forces. They must be able to halt terrorist and paramilitary action by Hamas and Islamic Jihad even if this means interrogations, detentions and trials that are too rapid and lack due process.

The report's author, Anthony Cordesman, argues that both sides will have to conduct "aggressive security operations for years to come" which may have "a high price tag in terms of human rights":

> Effective counter-terrorism relies on interrogation methods that border on psychological and/or physical torture, arrests and detentions that are "arbitrary" by the standards of civil law, break-ins and intelligence operations that violate the normal rights of privacy, levels of violence in making arrests that are unacceptable in civil cases, and measures that involve the innocent (or at least not provably directly guilty) in arrests and penalties.

Such methods have already been tested in Kosovo. For the reality of life there, we turn to *eXile*, an Internet magazine published by American expatriates in Moscow. One of them, Mark Ames, filed a report from Kosovo (October 26) that is part Graham Greene, part Dante:

> The internationals working here for the UN administration, for the OSCE, for NGOs and news organizations, are the most demoralized, cynical group of people this side of the Moscow Times headquarters. Most came in hating the Serbs, and found themselves soon hating the Albanians at least as much, and now are just trying to save their sanity and get out of this hellhole before they're dragged down with it. "We call the Albanians 'rats' and 'cockroaches,'" one top UNMIK official told me. "If they gave guns to the internationals here, there'd be another genocide. Much bigger than what the Serbs did. Much worse."

The U.N. administrators, Ames explains, are stuck with a monster of their own creation and know that any open confrontation with the officially disbanded KLA would lead to "a rapid undoing of the Western presence, a complete collapse, and bloodshed." That may be happening anyway:

> The day before I arrived for a piece I was going to write on the German occupation force . . . the KLA had set off a car bomb in Dragash, a Muslim Slav enclave outside of Prizren. The bomb went off one house away from an American working for the OSCE, and in front of the house of an OSCE interpreter. The same day, a bomb had gone off just a couple hundred meters away from the UNMIK police headquarters in Prizren.

Compared to Kosovo, a tropical island right in the middle of the Indian Ocean by the name of Diego Garcia sounds like paradise. But according to the London *Guardian* (September 1), Washington's concern for human rights does not extend to the island's less fortunate inhabitants, who were removed in 1973 to make room for one of the biggest U.S. Air Force bases abroad. According to a confidential State

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Department letter leaked to the paper, resettlement of the islands "would significantly degrade the strategic importance of a vital military asset unique in the region." The exiles want to repopulate two islands some 140 miles from the base, but an assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs wrote to his British colleagues

> to express the United States government's serious concern over the inevitable compromise to the current and future strategic value of Diego Garcia that would result from any move to settle a permanent resident population on any of the islands of the Chagos archipelago. In carrying out our defence and security responsibilities in the Arabian Gulf, the Middle East, south Asia and east Africa, Diego Garcia represents for us an all but indispensable platform . . . If a resident population were established on the Chagos archipelago, that could well imperil Diego Garcia's present advantage as a base from which it is possible to conduct sensitive military operations that are important for the security of both our governments but that, for reasons of security, cannot be staged from bases near population centres.

The door may be closed to Diego Garcians, but—as we learn from the *Times* of London—"Bosnia opens the door to Europe for Iranian illegal immigrants" (August 31):

> A senior United Nations official watched another planeload of Iranians fly into Sarajevo airport on what is becoming an almost daily smuggling run: "There should be a sign on the tarmac saying 'Welcome to Bosnia–the open backdoor to Fortress Europe'," he said . . . International investigators believe up to 10,000 migrants a month are arriving here by air and road and then smuggled through Bosnia's largely unguarded borders on their way to the main European capitals.

The *Times* fails to point out that Bosnian Muslims (and especially their political class) desire to help as many of their Middle Eastern coreligionists as possible settle in the infidel West. This particular connection was explored in an article on Bosnia's role in the smuggling of illegals published in the *Middle East Newsline* (September 17):

> Iranian fighters who participated in the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo are illegally resettling in Western Europe. Russian diplomats said many of the Iranian fighters trying to enter Western Europe have participated in the current war in Chechnya. NATO said the Iranians have not been training in Bosnia but sources in the alliance acknowledge that the fighters have been traveling with their weapons.

Many of them will be heading to Berlin, Stuttgart, or Munich, which may be why, as the *Independent* reported on November 7, "the opposition Christian Democrats declared that foreigners were welcome in the Fatherland, provided they behaved just like Germans." That is the message of a policy paper adopted by the party's presidium:

> It features emotive terms, such as "patriotism," "the nation," and "the Fatherland" and also the new word "Leitkultur" which critics say is an ill-disguised synonym for "assimilation." . . . Economic think-tanks say the country needs up to 250,000 immigrants every year to keep industry going and pay the pensions of the post-war generation.

The millions of Muslim *Gastarbeiters* in Germany may soon be followed by the veterans of the current *intifada* in the Middle East. Edward Said, a veteran critic of U.S. media bias in that conflict, was nevertheless occasionally allowed a few column-inches on the subject in national newspapers. After a recent diatribe in the Pakistani daily *Dawn* (*www.dawn.com/2000/11/03/op.htm#1*), however, he is likely to be banished from the national media:

> The events . . . in Palestine have been a near-total triumph for Zionism in the United States for the first time since the modern re-emergence of the Palestinian national movement in the late 1960s. Political as well as public discourse has so definitively transformed Israel into the victim during the recent clashes, that even though 140 Palestinian lives were lost and close to 5000 casualties have been reported, it is still something called "Palestinian violence" that has disrupted the smooth and orderly flow of the "peace process."

This mindset, Said says, is "truly staggering in its recklessness and were it not very much a practical, as well as actual distortion of reality one could quite easily be talking about a form of private mental derangement."

> The further peculiarity of American Zionism, which is a system of antithetical thought and Orwellian distortion, is that it is impermissible to speak of Jewish violence, or Jewish actions when it comes to Israel, even though everything done by Israel is done in the name of the Jewish people for and by a Jewish state.

Said ends by complaining that the American flag can be burned in public, but the systematic continuity of Israel's 52-year treatment of the Palestinians is "a narrative with no permission to appear":

> There is simply no people in the world today whose killing on television screens seems to be considered by most American viewers to be acceptable as well-deserved punishment. This is the case with Palestinians whose daily loss of life in the past month is herded under the rubric "the violence on both sides," as if the stones and slings of young men thoroughly tired of injustice and repression were a major offence rather than the courageous resistance to a demeaning fate meted out to them not just by Israeli soldiers armed by America, but by a peace process designed to coop them up in Bantustans and reservations fit for animals.

Edward, it was nice knowing you. You might want to talk to Joe Sobran about starting your own newsletter, since that's the only way you are likely to get published from now on.

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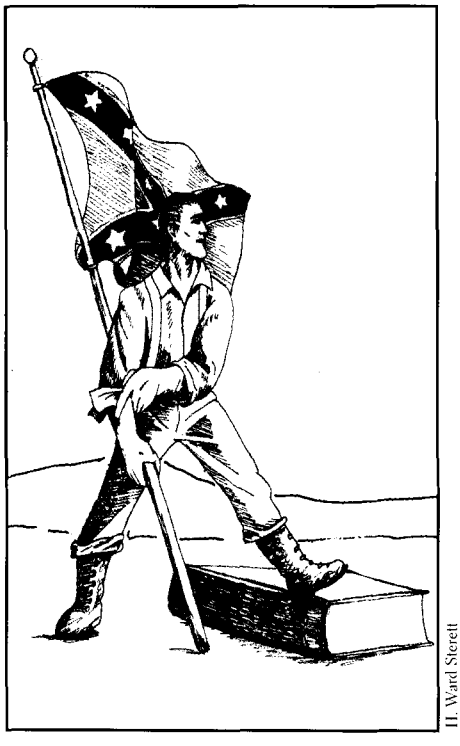
Raising a Flag for Mr. Davidson

by Randall Ivey

"An outlaw fumbling for the latch, a voice
Commanding in a dream where no flag flies."
—Donald Davidson, "Lee in the Mountains"

Where No Flag Flies: Donald Davidson and the Southern Resistance
by Mark Royden Winchell
Columbia: University of Missouri Press; 386 pp., $29.95



H. Ward Sterett

The University of Missouri's publication of *Where No Flag Flies: Donald Davidson and the Southern Resistance* does much to redress a literary grievance. Donald Davidson, the late poet and professor of English at Vanderbilt University, has often appeared as either a peripheral figure or a "co-star" in works that attempted to decipher or debunk the mystique of Agrarianism. Not since Thomas Daniel Young's and M. Thomas Inge's 1971 *Donald Davidson* has there been a book devoted exclusively to the life and achievements, both creative and philosophical, of Davidson. The appearance of Professor Winchell's excellent and thorough new biography is a welcome event; it may also turn out to be something of a milestone.

Winchell's study owes its origin to M.E. Bradford. Bradford had collected material over the years for a projected biography of his teacher, but by his untimely death in early 1993, he had written only one chapter. Two years later, Bradford's widow, Marie, urged Professor Winchell to take up where her husband had left off.

In his preface, Winchell sums up his case for Davidson:

> He is universally regarded as one of the four most important poets of the Fugitive movement, which is itself one of the two most important groups to write in English during the twentieth century. . . . As a social and political writer, he was one of the most significant influences on conservative thought in the twentieth century. . . . [H]e produced a substantial body of literary criticism, the libretto of an American folk opera, a widely used composition textbook, and a remarkable novel, which was published nearly three decades after his death.

Davidson's compatriots John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren have not lacked for serious attention, and Winchell considers Davidson's poetry the equal of the verse of these three men. But Ransom, Tate, and Warren made peace with a world and a mindset that remained alien to Davidson. The three of them wound up in "enemy" territory: Ransom escaped to Ohio to edit the *Kenyon Review*; Tate, to New York to pursue fame and his many mistresses; and Warren, to New Haven, Connecticut, to write of his native Kentucky. Davidson, however, remained in Nashville for the rest of his career and life. Ransom tossed off his Agrarian armor in later years and embraced the smooth silk robes of the New Deal, while Warren wrote tracts chastising the South for its

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position in the War Between the States. Only Davidson remained unreconstructed to the end, an ardent hater of centralization in all its guises in government, in the arts, and in American social life; he never trimmed his political sails to meet the winds of fashion. In many ways, he was the Last Agrarian (to crib a chapter-name from Winchell's book). While the Democratic Party, once the sacred home of the white Southerner, veered off into Rooseveltian socialism, Davidson remained Jeffersonian to the end, as did his good friend and fellow Bread Loaf retreat instructor Robert Frost (a reactionary who would have embraced the epithet with some pleasure and justification).

In matters of art and literature, Ransom, Tate, and Warren experimented with modernism and accepted many of its tenets at face value. Davidson, on the other hand, was a more pragmatic modernist. He could never appreciate Eliot's *The Waste Land*. "What he found most lacking in Eliot's verse," says Winchell, "was 'memorableness'—that is 'happiness and ultimateness of expression.'" As Davidson observed to Tate,

> No matter how adequate a form of expression may seem to you as a poet, you must consider that artistic expression in a void is a pretty poor proposition; that is where Eliot is going. . . . He is . . . in a vacuum, in [The] Waste Land, which I have read three times, with no gleam whatever of comprehension.

Davidson also loathed the Joycean notion of the artist as alienated from his own community, defying its conventions and shaking off its bonds. For him, the artist was a bard of his place, a recorder of its deeds and denizens; the only way a proper and accurate record could be kept was if the artist were *part* of the community, not estranged from it. He distrusted literature that could not be shared by a community at large, whether its members were learned or not. "A poetry that puts itself in a position not to be recited," Winchell quotes him saying at the 1956 reunion of the Fugitives, "not to be sung, hardly ever to be read aloud from the page where it stands, almost never to be memorized, is nearing the danger age of absurdity."

For the most part, Davidson avoided experimentation. Only in his first collection, *An Outland Piper*, did he employ such mythological figures as dryads, nymphs, and dragons to differentiate the "world of mundane experience from the realm of imagination." To many of the critics who have bothered to read Davidson's later verse, he seems hopelessly antiquated, provincial, and unworthy of further critical attention. Instead of following in the footsteps of Joyce and Eliot, Davidson wrote about the mountain people of Tennessee, the "tall men," as he dubbed them: men such as Andrew Jackson and his own frontier kinsman, Andrew Davidson (the indefatigable Indian fighter), and, of course, tall men of even broader regional significance such as Robert E. Lee. While depicting the sterility of modern life, he contrasts it with his people's rich past—the history of those men and women who cleared the wilderness and made a place for civilization. Where there is confusion in his poems, it is over an industrialism that has supplanted the old ways, the old dispensation.

In Davidson's one novel, *The Big Ballad Jamboree*, published posthumously, he celebrates *real* country music, the music of these very real people, with its roots buried deep in the folk and bluegrass traditions of the region and bearing no resemblance to the pop-saturated confections churned out by the likes of Shania Twain and Garth Brooks (who claim Elton John and Billy Joel as their main influences).

Davidson's earliest aspirations were not literary; like many young boys of his day, he wanted to be a train engineer. He showed no real interest in literature until his second matriculation at Vanderbilt following a stint with the U.S. Army during World War I. (In France, he nearly lost his life under enemy fire.) Upon returning to Nashville, he fell in with a group of young men who gathered around a rather eccentric Nashvillian named Sidney Hirsch. Hirsch acted as a kind of intellectual mentor to Davidson and his young friends, all of whom would gather at Hirsch's home on 20th Avenue to discuss linguistic and literary matters and to be entertained by Hirsch's various flights of fancy. Later, when Davidson brought along his Vanderbilt Shakespeare professor, John Crowe Ransom, the group's discussions focused on poetry. Ransom also gave the proceedings a much-needed dose of gravity. The first fruit of these informal meetings was the *Fugitive* magazine, a brilliant literary journal featuring poetry and essays that was published from 1922 until 1925. Although each member of the group made some contribution to the *Fugitive*, the bulk of the "dirty work"—the editing, the selling of subscriptions, etc.—fell to Davidson, who performed the tasks often without recompense or recognition but out of sheer love for the thing at hand. The later, and much greater, result of the Fugitive meetings, of course, was *I'll Take My Stand*.

As a young man, Davidson considered himself a political moderate, although he was careful to delineate *his* liberalism as the 18th-century Jeffersonian variety, not New Deal liberalism. His early political views were probably influenced by Dr. Edwin Mims, the president of Vanderbilt and author of the Southern Progressive bible, *The Advancing South: Stories of Progress and Reaction*. Following Mims' cue, Davidson assumed a "progressive" stance regarding the Scopes trial: He was concerned that the people of Dayton, Tennessee, were drawing unnecessary attention and thus exposing themselves and their state to the rest of the nation as a mob of ill-informed hicks bent on thwarting progress. Still, a case can be made that Davidson was never a liberal in the modern sense, because his foremost concerns were always regional and, therefore, conservative. He believed that, through the wisdom earned by its collective experience, Tennessee knew what was best for Tennessee just as South Carolina knows what is best for South Carolina, and New England knows what is best for itself. He feared and despised centralization of any kind and thought that the concentration in the Northeast of power and prestige in the arts would lead to mediocrity in culture. Davidson believed that local communities should form their own artistic traditions. In a searing essay on contemporary art entitled "New York and the Hinterlands," he excoriated cultural centralization:

> To a people the greater part of whom were schooled in Protestant religion and morality New York presented, with a knowing leer, under the guise of literary classics, the works of voluptuaries and perverts, the teeming pages of *Psychopathia Sexualis*, and all the choicest remains of the literary bordellos of the ancient and modern world. German Expressionism, French Dadaism, the erotic primitivism of D.H. Lawrence, the gigantic *fin de*

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siècle pedantries of James Joyce, the infantilism of Gertrude Stein and various Parisian coteries—these furnished the catchwords of the clever people.

Davidson so hated New York and all it represented that, when he drove to Vermont to attend the Bread Loaf every year, he did his best to circumvent the city, even if it meant going hundreds of miles out of his way.

Davidson was a merciless critic of big business; in fact, the primary targets of *I'll Take My Stand* are rampant industrialism and materialism. In his contribution to the forum, "A Mirror for Artists," Davidson worries about the influence of big business on the production and dissemination of art, which he feared would be turned into just another commodity to be bought and sold. "The leisure thus offered [by mass industrialism]," he writes,

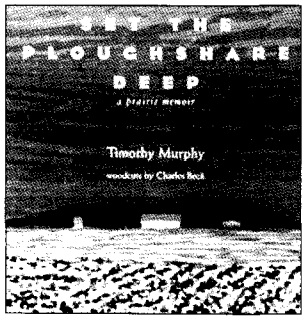
> is really no leisure at all; either it is pure sloth, under which the arts take on the character of mere entertainment, purchased in boredom and enjoyed in utter passivity; or it is another kind of labor, taken up out of a sense of duty, pursued as a kind of fashionable enterprise for which one's courage must be continually whipped up by reminders of one's obligation to culture.

The consistency of Davidson's political philosophy occasionally embarrassed his Vanderbilt colleagues. Winchell's chapter "Who Will Speak for the White Man" provides the key to understanding why Davidson's work has been largely ignored: He was an unapologetic supporter of segregation. He did not hate black people (as some of his less thoughtful detractors have claimed), but he believed in the old system because it was all he had ever known. While such an arrangement remained in place, he reasoned, society could maintain proper social and political order. He was neither an agitator nor a violent protester in this cause but worked quietly through legitimate means, including cofounding the Tennessee Foundation for Constitutional Government, which paid for legal aid for those who had been arrested in public demonstrations against forced integration.

If Davidson attained greatness, it was probably not as a poet but as a teacher and polemicist. For more than 50 years at Vanderbilt, he sowed seeds in the minds of some of the 20th century's finest poets, novelists, and critics. The roster of his students includes Robert Penn Warren, Randall Jarrell, Jesse Stuart, Cleanth Brooks, James Dickey, Elizabeth Spencer, Madison Jones, Mel Bradford, and many others who have publicly remembered their former teacher with great reverence and gratitude.

While most of the Agrarians eventually renounced the beliefs expressed in *I'll Take My Stand*, embracing more fashionable—and profitable—views, Davidson remained steadfast to the end. Winchell's Donald Davidson is not a cold, humorless, austere ideologue but a man deeply in love with music, literature, his wife, his state, and with his region and its rich and enduring culture and heritage. c

American literature



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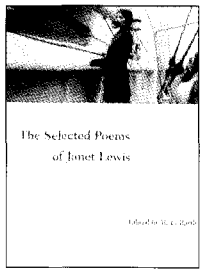

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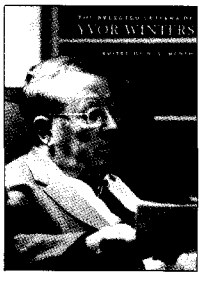

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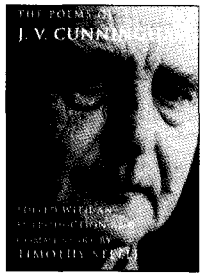

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Mr. Clinton's Legacy

by Clark Stooksbury

"Feeling Your Pain": The Explosion and Abuse of Government Power in the Clinton-Gore Years
by James Bovard
New York: St. Martin's Press;
426 pp., $26.95

◆

Bill Clinton has often been compared to Warren G. Harding, and considering that president's scandals and adulterous affair within the White House, the parallel seems valid. The better comparison, however, may be with Harding's predecessor, Woodrow Wilson. At least that is the impression one gets reading James Bovard's book. Under Wilson, the country witnessed a huge growth in government through such things as the income-tax amendment, the Federal Reserve, and the Espionage Act. The century's teen years also witnessed the Great War, the Creel Commission, and the Palmer raids. The 1990's gave us the bombing of Yugoslavia, Barry McCaffrey's insertion of drug-war propaganda into network TV, and Janet Reno. While Clinton's record is modest compared to Wilson's, Bovard—a libertarian journalist—has still assumed a formidable burden in documenting eight years of lies and abuse of power.

The more benign aspects of Clinton's legacy are found in those few remaining government agencies, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency, whose calling cards aren't submachine guns, tanks, and no-knock warrants. FEMA was created in the Carter years to cope with natural disasters or nuclear war; President Clinton has turned it into an open spigot, freely dispensing cash. After an earthquake in California in 1994, FEMA sent checks to many residents on the basis of their ZIP codes, including many who had made no damage claim; the agency has performed similar acts across the country, even in less electoral-vote-rich states.

The AmeriCorps "service" program, one of Clinton's proudest accomplishments, is a massive boondoggle on which Bovard has shone a penetrating light. AmeriCorps would be a waste of money if it consisted of earnest, ponytailed youths collecting aluminum cans in the name of public service. It is, however, far more insidious, much of its purpose being to serve as a backdrop for Clinton propaganda rallies and to engage in illegal political agitation. "Some AmeriCorps projects seem to be largely federally paid rabble-rousing," Bovard writes.

> AmeriCorps is paying four members to work with the Political Asylum Project of Austin, Texas. Program director Nidia Salamanca declared: "There are a lot of immigrants who are in detention right now—we see how their rights are being violated by police officers and by detention officers—we document INS encounters with immigrants—if they are respecting their rights." AmeriCorps support for the Whatcom [Washington State] Human Rights Task Force is paying for AmeriCorps members to "organize the Hispanic population . . . to develop a program of monitoring, reporting and stopping INS . . . abuses of the Hispanic population."

When not serving as the Clinton Youth or aiding illegal immigrants, AmeriCorps members recruit people to sign up as food-stamp recipients, engage in toy-gun buy-back programs, agitate for housing subsidies and rent control, and encourage child sex-abuse witch-hunts in Janet Reno's old South Florida stomping grounds. Americorps has also taken up the cause of child literacy, despite the fact that the

> largest single item that AmeriCorps spends for training its own members is for General Equivalency Degree (GED) preparation—helping AmeriCorps members get their high school degree.

The meat of "*Feeling Your Pain*" lies in its dozens of examples of federal assaults on the liberty and property of average Americans in the last eight years. Much of what Bovard recounts is old hat, but it is useful—and terrifying—to see it gathered in one place. The Waco assault was a defining moment in the Clinton years: In this single episode, the administration displayed its dishonesty, contempt for human life, and deadly desire to help "the children." Bovard covers territory familiar to anyone who has studied the raid, but his account still makes for chilling reading as he quotes Democrats, terrified by the prospect of any examination of the government's actions at Mount Carmel, attempting to cover up the disaster. According to then-congressman Charles Schumer, attempts to bring the perpetrators to justice were "an attack on the ATF. This planned hearing was simply some red meat to some of those extreme right forces." Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin perversely explained that the Waco raid could not be understood "outside of the context of [the] Oklahoma City [bombing]" that occurred two years later, the implication being that only some sort of Nazi terrorist would question the raid. When, in 1999, the cover was stripped from some of the government's lies, Janet Reno attempted to preserve a few shreds of credibility; the investigation she called for, however, had problems. "Reno could have recused herself from any role in choosing a new person to reinvestigate Waco," Bovard suggests. "Instead, she personally chose John Danforth, a former senator and a golfing buddy of Clinton's, to be in charge of the reinvestigation."

As Bovard observes, Bill Clinton has been the most anti-gun president in U.S. history: He signed the Brady Bill into law in 1993 and the "assault weapons" ban in 1994. Truth, however, has been the biggest casualty in Clinton's war on guns. The President, who has enjoyed pandering to the police, made a special show of appearing with the widows of police officers killed by "cop-killer bullets," which can penetrate police body armor. Memorializing Daniel Doffyn, a Chicago cop killed in 1995, Clinton proclaimed that, "if a bullet can rip through a bulletproof vest like knife through hot butter, then it ought to be history. We should ban it." But Bovard reveals a minor detail that the leader of the free world left out: "Doffyn died after being shot in the head as well as being shot in the chest

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by a bullet that passed through an opening in his vest: no bullet penetrated his body armor." And in October 1996, the President used the death of Louisiana's Jerome Harrison Seaberry to further his anti-gun agenda. "In Lake Charles," he intoned:

> I met with that officer's widow and two beautiful, beautiful young sons. And I thought to myself, "You know, if people like these folks here are going to put their lives on the line for us, the least we can do is tell them if they put on a bullet-proof vest, it will protect them from being killed." That's the least we can do for them.

It turns out that the late Mr. Seaberry died in an automobile accident, thus inadvertently contributing to the President's—and his Vice President's—penchant for creative fictions.

"Feeling Your Pain" is not a comprehensive history of the Clinton years, so you don't have to hide it from your children. It does not delve into areas (such as health care) where Clinton failed to get what he wanted, or the numerous scandals that have dogged his administration. What it does demonstrate is that Bovard has the strong stomach required of a pathologist: Think of him as a journalistic Quincy, examining the mangled corpse of the U.S. Constitution.

Clark Stooksbury writes from Knoxville, Tennessee.

Gather Ye Rosebuds

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Privileged Moments:
Encounters With Writers
by Jeffrey Meyers
Madison: University of Wisconsin Press;
149 pp., $24.95

◆

Jeffrey Meyers, a biographer whose fascination with the literary life is touchingly suggestive of the enthusiasm small boys used to have for the railroading one, is the only person I can think of who would consider it a "privilege" to be led on, toyed with, lied to, and finally betrayed by V.S. Naipaul. Scott Fitzgerald thought that writers were barely human; undaunted, Meyers wrote a biography of him. (Fitzgerald himself was an exceptionally sweet-natured man.) Conceivably, Meyers might even have enjoyed a stayover at Combe Florey with Evelyn Waugh, who was given to making terrible faces at his guests through the window. Less temeritous souls than Meyers would think twice about bearding literary lions in their lairs, less tenacious ones would shy from the pain of disenchantment by acquainting themselves with the crashing personal bores that all too often hide out behind scintillating literary *personae*. Finally, there are the braggarts and swaggerers—for example, Ernest Hemingway and James Dickey—who make you catch water moccasins with your bare hands, swim the Florida Straits, or try your hand with a cape and a young bull before lunch. Perhaps because fortune favors the brave, Jeffrey Meyers has been surprisingly fortunate in his literary encounters. Naipaul, of course, is inhuman (he could be called a monster, save for the neurasthenic weakness that prompts his behavior), while Allen Ginsberg (contrary to Meyers' professed admiration) sounds about as compelling as his poetry. Though it might be overstating the case to say Meyers never met a writer he didn't like, "like" in this context is comparable to the emotion a scientist feels for any one of his specimens. As a prolific literary scholar, Jeffrey Meyers collects authors the way a herpetologist collects snakes and lizards; the only ones he doesn't "like" are those that got away.

Privileged Moments, which includes portraits of Ginsberg, Dickey, Ed Dorn, Arthur Miller, Iris Murdoch, Naipaul, Francis King, and J.F. Powers, leaves me somewhat at a disadvantage in feeling no affinity for the work of any of these authors, Powers excepted. (I have never read a line by Arthur Miller, while Ed Dorn and Francis King, the English novelist, were previously unknown to me.) It's a tribute to Meyers' skill as an interviewer and biographer that I was with him most of the way in his 39th book which, owing to its tight interior design, is not as brief as its 149 pages suggest. Ed Dorn—the late poet, novelist, and nonfiction writer whom Meyers knew when both men were members of the English faculty at the University of Colorado at Boulder—turns out to have been an academic version of Ed Abbey, while Miller comes across as an engaging and civilized fellow, despite his naive and objectionable politics. The essay on Murdoch and her husband, John, to whom the Meyerses were close, is good work, a study in genial English eccentricity. However, the final chapter, about the Minnesota novelist J.F. Powers, is an absolutely splendid job, by itself worth the price of the book. For various reasons, I had always been put off by Powers' stuff, but Meyers' brilliant treatment sent me back to his last book, *Wheat That Springeth Green*, a review copy of which I had owned since its publication in 1988.

Jim Powers (1917-1999), born in Illinois of immigrant Irish parents, lived alternately in Ireland and Minnesota, where he taught at St. John's University in Collegeville; beyond that, as Meyers puts it, Powers "never went anywhere." He did not involve himself in literary politics, give readings, or engage in other forms of self-promotion. An old-fashioned Catholic, he disliked what the Church as well as America was becoming, and deeply distrusted the materialist impulse. (He never owned his own home but moved 30 times with his wife and five children; when Meyers met them, the Powerses were living in a small, shabby house rented from the university.) A slow worker who frequently suffered from writer's block, he spent 20 years on one of his five books. In old age, after the death of his wife from cancer, he moved into a still smaller house where he did his laundry on his knees beside a rusty bathtub and wrote at a low table in the one "warmish" room beside a line of books inscribed by Waugh, Flannery O'Connor, Peter Taylor, and Robert Lowell. Lonely as a widower, he disliked "most social life" and never attended cultural events on campus, while reading books had become a "distraction." Powers refused Meyers' offer to interview him for the *Paris Review*'s "Writers at Work" series as a means to enhance his reputation; later he wrote:

> I no longer (if I ever did, in my heart) believe there is any hope for me as a popular author, even a literary one, and so it's not as you think, indifference to my career, but simply recognizing reality for what it must be for me.

While one suspects Jeffrey Meyers—whose favorite authors are D.H. Lawrence, Thomas Mann, Wyndham Lewis, André Malraux, and Hemingway—

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might as a general rule prefer more flamboyant subjects, what I believe makes this portrait a stunner is Meyers' (perhaps reluctant) recognition that J.F. Powers' is the *realest* type of the literary life. Meyers seems both appalled and attracted by his late friend's meager existence, perhaps for the reason that he recognizes him to have been an example of what amounts, by now, to an endangered species.

What has occurred since the 1960's—beginning maybe as early as the 1920's—is the coalescence of a shadow literary world that, within the past two decades, has succeeded almost entirely in supplanting the bodied one. The "creative" writer of today, sporting an M.F.A. degree, a sheaf of recommendations by a number of literary lights, and a variety of awards, grants, and other emoluments, is more or less an accomplished professional performer and celebrity; as an author, however, he is no more than a literary amateur at best, at worst a fraudulent *poseur* whose reputation depends on careful networking and an elaborate mutual-praise-and-admiration society. What has happened to literature in our time is the hijacking of the grimy, sweaty, flesh-and-blood reality by the lustrous antiseptic specter, the replacement of Balzac in his dirty bathrobe with his piled coffee saucers around him by a bimbo beside her swimming pool, fey youths in dark glasses wearing black T-shirts under their designer sport coats, and the latest Asian Firecracker from San Francisco, flown out by her New York publisher to have her photo taken by Jill Krementz. Back in the 50's, Raymond Chandler wondered how many people there were left in America who could read a paragraph from a novel—any novel—and say whether the man who wrote it was a writer or not. Today, the new breed of publishers, largely interested in videos, movie rights, and celebrity-chasing, can't begin to tell the difference (not that it wants to, or cares). The "writers"—unskilled or badly skilled, ignorant, vapid, shallow, self-absorbed, and nihilistic; knowing little of life but plenty about ideological fashion and what it takes to achieve celebrity—who swamp the major publishing houses with print-out *mss.* belong, mostly, to this shadow world, which publishers have learned to accept for the real one. (They think a writer *ought* to write like Bobbie Ann Mason or whoever it is that wrote *White Snow on Dark Cedars*!) What has happened here is what has overtaken so much in modern society: A well-organized, well-disciplined, and mutually supportive cadre of eager wannabes set its sights on an institution it considered (for all the wrong reasons) eminently desirable, first infiltrated, then seized it, then—finally—chased the artists and professionals out. As for the publishers' acquiescence in this Bloodless Revolution, I suppose you really can't blame them, the impostors having largely supplied the market for their work *as well as* the means of production and a promotional system (themselves) much more effective than what the publishing houses have in place. The result is that real writers—including many with established reputations—can't get contracts nowadays.

While J.F. Powers cannot supply the glamour of many writers, the fewer of the genuine article (like Powers) and the more of the pod variety there are in years to come, the fewer privileged moments will be available to the indefatigable powerhouse Jeffrey Meyers (*still* only 61 years old!) and his successors in literary scholarship. To Meyers' credit, he does seem to understand this.

Chilton Williamson, Jr., is the senior editor for books at Chronicles.

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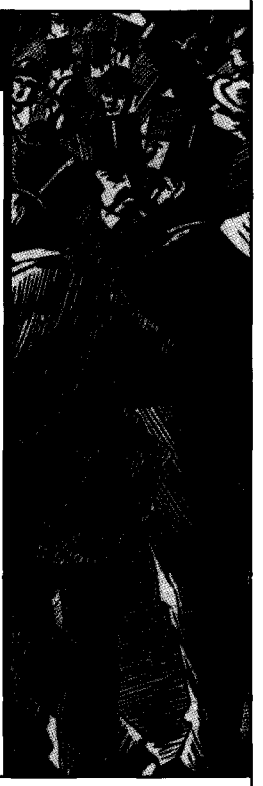

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The Central Intelligence Agency

by J.O. Tate

Essays of Four Decades
by Allen Tate
Wilmington, DE: ISI Books;
640 pp., $29.95

There are historical reasons—historical in more than one sense—why we should be glad to see this work back in print. Since I can so well remember owning the editions of 1959 and 1968 and absorbing their contents, the thought that these essays will reach new readers in the new millennium is a pleasant one. And that in itself is remarkable in our new age.

The first historical reason that comes to mind is that these essays, written from the early 30's to the late 60's, are a record of the intellectual progress of one of the most remarkable writers and personalities in the story of American literature. As a member of the Fugitives, a leader of the Nashville Agrarians, a distinguished poet and even a novelist, as a professor and man of letters, Allen Tate made his mark in the unfolding of the New Criticism. These essays record, among other things, the establishment of a "weak modernist" view of literature that has been the most influential way of reading and teaching literature in the last century. This means that the next historical reason for reading the essays is to absorb their hedged ahistoricism. In "Miss Emily and the Bibliographers," the critic concludes (as he dismisses the sterility of bibliography and "the historical method"), "[T]he literature of the past lives in the literature of the present and nowhere else; that it is all present literature." Yes, but we have noted that this view, a radical one, is qualified.

And this brings us to a contradiction, I hope—namely that these essays are also valuable, or ever more invaluable, for their historical consciousness—I did not say "historical method." Or perhaps I should say that the historical consciousness is a philosophical one, or even a remarkable sophistication:

> I have wished only to observe that before the Christian dispensation, and well into it, the professors of special knowledge tried to be responsible for the public use of their techniques. We have not, so far as I know, a record of any of their reasons for what we should consider an illiberal suppression of the truth. But if we think of the Greek world of thought as having lasted about nine hundred years, down to the great pupils of Plotinus—Jamblichus and Porphyrius—we may see in it a sense of the whole of life that must not be too quickly disturbed for the procreation of special scientific interests.

I would call such a perspective indispensable, if I did not know that in fact it has been dispensed with by the educational system of this country. Therefore, we must today read Tate's 50 pieces as they have not been read before—not so much as instruction as a record of losses. He had already implied as much when he insisted on the necessity of cultural perspective, concluding his "Understanding Modern Poetry" as follows:

> [M]odern poetry is difficult because we have lost the art of reading any poetry at all that will not read itself to us; that thus our trouble is a fundamental problem of education, which may be more fundamental than education. We may be approaching the time when we shall no longer be able to read anything and shall be subject to passive conditioning. Until this shall happen, however, we might possibly begin to look upon language as a field of study, not as an impressionistic debauch. If we wish to understand anything, there is only the hard way; if we wish to understand Donne and Eliot, perhaps we had better begin, young, to read the classical languages, and a little later the philosophies. There is probably no other way.

So yes, the literary interest is paramount in these essays, and there is little need to cite the titles and subjects and various treatments of poetic and functional topics. The word "tension" must remind us of a certain examination of poetry, and the names of Emily Dickinson, Edgar Allan Poe, John Donne, Hart Crane, and even Longinus must remind us of Tate's essays about them. Then, of course, there is the matter of Tate's essays on the South, which everyone knows and quotes and attempts to refute. These are indispensable as well, and like the literary essays, they not only instruct us but force us to consider the kind of man it was who

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Vulture Acres

by Timothy Murphy

He started with half a pasture
and a grove of Soil Bank ash
when farms were selling faster
after a market crash.

He posted "Vulture Acres"
by the dirt tract to his shack
on land no other takers
sought at the auction block.

Leasing fields from neighbors
who were old or going broke,
he shouldered barnyard labors
as an ox shoulders a yoke.

He built a cedar smokehouse
where his culled sows were cured
and added a redwood ranch house
when his cash flow was assured.

But he also bought the scripture
that told him all was dust,
however lush the pasture
where someone else went bust.

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had such knowledge carried to his heart.

But beyond such necessary works are other treatments of topics that I will call political and even religio-philosophical. Two of the best essays were presented at the International Exposition of the Arts (under the auspices of the Congress for Cultural Freedom) in Paris in 1951, and I will neglect this context to observe that the Central Intelligence Agency would be more likely to sponsor covertly today a hip-hop poetry slam than any such witty rebuttal of vulgarized democracy.

> Will it not be borne in upon us in the next few years that Hitler and Stalin *are* the Common Man, and that one of the tasks of democracy is to allow as many men as possible to make themselves uncommon?

If anything can be better than that, then it must be the essay "The Angelic Imagination," which shows the falsehood of claiming, or aspiring to, unmediated knowledge of essences. It is the most sophisticated portrayal of modern error and even perversion that I know—and I believe that it accurately prophesied a great deal of contemporary confusion, including Harold Bloom's latest excursi on his gnosticism.

In short, Allen Tate's essays are necessary, and that's why they are again available. They ought someday to be published (with other examples of his work) in the Library of America; as a single volume of literary/cultural criticism, the *Essays of Four Decades* is the finest example of its kind in American literary history.

J.O. Tate is a professor of English at Dowling College on Long Island.

In Season and Out

by Christie Davies

Encyclopedia of
20th-Century American Humor
Alleen Pace Nilsen and Don Nilsen
Phoenix: Oryx Press; 360 pp., $79.75

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The Nilsens have produced an interesting, erudite, and thorough *Encyclopedia of 20th-Century American Humor* with entries ranging from American Indian humor to cartoons, exaggeration, hoaxes, joke patterns, sitcoms, and wit. It is a truly comprehensive and encyclopedic volume with an excellent bibliography, a work that will become a standard reference not just in libraries but in the homes of those who love humor.

America exports not only film and television comedies but new genres of jokes. The riddling style of joke, the rebirth of the ethnic joke in the latter half of the 20th century, disaster and dead-celebrities jokes, lawyer jokes, and blonde jokes—all have been exported to the rest of the world, which has then copied and adapted them to local circumstances, while adding a dash of relevance and ingenuity. In the 20th century, American humor became an important cultural influence throughout the rest of the world: a process much accelerated by the internet.

And so it is not simply Americans who will appreciate this book. Nonetheless, many of the entries—blackface comedy, comic books, dialect humor, frontier humor, urban legends, and vaudeville—relate to distinctive aspects of the American cultural tradition. Curiously, the entry on irony in American humor is only just over a page long, much of it concerned with such celebrated Americans as George Bernard Shaw, Jonathan Swift, and Peter Sellers. The entry on wit is also very short. Section F begins with "Fiction," and there is no entry on "Feminist Humor," perhaps because there's no such thing. Jewish humor, however, gets a well-deserved five pages. (It is striking that Jews constitute a far greater proportion of comedy writers and comedians in America than they do of writers and actors in general.) A further useful aspect of the encyclopedia is its attention to humor scholarship—a branch of learning more developed in America than in any other country, even though it has its origins in Britain—as well as to concepts needed to understand humor better. There are, for instance, excellent sections on ambiguity, incongruity, language play, metaphor, and superiority as aspects of how humor works.

While the 20th century was a great one for American humor, it produced two forces that now threaten not only comedy but American culture in general: dumbing-down and political correctness. The importation from England of the Teletubbies, which are bound to stultify and retard children's progress in mastering language and concepts, is a good example of both of these forces in action. The obviously gay Teletubbies are England's triangular revenge for Disney's vulgarization of Winnie the Pooh. The original by A.A. Milne is a sophisticated book for adults as well as children; the Disney film is simply a means to sell cuddly toys. The problem lies with the publishers of juvenile books, staffed as they are by over-cautious, category-bound old women of both sexes devoted to dumbing-down and political correctness alike. These businesses, moreover, are not even commercially successful: Most of their income comes from the reprinting of old favorites. (Over 40 houses turned down the money-spinning Harry Potter before it found a publisher.) No wonder the Nilsens' entry on children's literature consists largely of lists of older books and summaries of their plots.

Inevitably, the text includes a number of references to the rise of political correctness in America, from which an outsider concludes that the results have been censorship, the cramping of creativity, and a suffocating climate of fear. Indeed, most of the best American humor of the 20th century could not have originated—let alone been published or broadcast—during the 1990's. (Another exuberant, aggressive, exciting American frontier is closing.) Accordingly, the Nilsens' encyclopedia is rich in press accounts of p.c. incidents such as the harassment of, and near assault on, John O'Sullivan when he visited Yale to justify *National Review*'s mockery of the Clinton-Gore administration's attempts to raise campaign contributions from Chinese businessmen by publishing a cartoon that portrayed members of Clinton's Cabinet with Chinese features. The Chinese themselves did not object, but the Yale vigilantes turned up with placards, spouting abuse and striking at one of America's most prominent editors. Another account tells of Mohamoud M. Ismail, a sociology professor at Trenton State College who, in 1995, sued two colleagues for collecting and distributing teaching material in the form of cartoons that he found offensive to blacks.

The Nilsens must have the best library in America of newspaper cuttings and internet downloads on their subject. All the humor that is fit to print can be found here, plus a good deal that isn't.

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Letter From Rockford

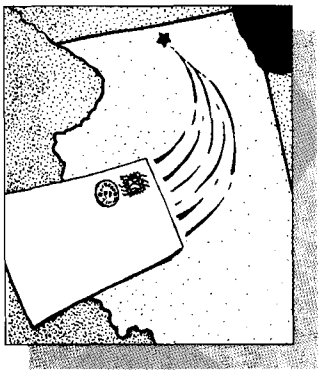
by Scott P. Richert

It Ain't Over 'Til It's Over

October 26, 2000, dawned pretty much like every other day here in Rockford, Illinois. After ten years of living under the dictatorship of a federal magistrate, we had decided that nothing would ever change. And then something did.

On that glorious Indian summer morning, the Illinois Supreme Court, by a vote of six to one, declared illegal the Rockford School Board's use of the school district's tort fund to pay for "remedies" in the Rockford school-desegregation case, known as *People Who Care*. Under the Illinois Local Government Employees Tort Immunity Act, a local governmental body can levy taxes "to pay any tort judgment or settlement for compensatory damages for which . . . it is liable . . . " Since 1991, Rockford's District 205 has raised almost $134 million in tort taxes (and has spent close to a quarter-billion dollars on the desegregation case). The money, however, was not distributed to the plaintiffs in the class-action lawsuit. Instead, it has been spent on a series of federal-court-ordered programs designed to narrow the achievement gap between white and minority (defined by the court as black and Hispanic) students, and to desegregate District 205 through busing and magnet schools. As a result, Rockford has the third-highest property tax rate in the nation and the most desegregated schools (as you long as you define "desegregation" as "racial quotas" rather than as allowing all students to attend their neighborhood schools). Meanwhile, both white and minority students perform worse on standardized tests than their counterparts did ten years ago.

It took eight years for the tax-protest case to make its way up through the courts. In October 1992, Michael O'Brien, a local attorney and self-described liberal Democrat, filed the first objection to the tort tax in Winnebago County Circuit Court. Two years later, Rockford Educating All Children, a citizens' group formed in response to the *People Who Care* suit, joined with O'Brien to collect tax-protest forms from District 205 taxpayers. Since then, as many as 16,000 property owners have



filed protests each year. Fighting this case *pro bono*, O'Brien estimates that he has spent over 3,000 hours on the tax protest.

O'Brien's case has taken a few twists and turns over the years, including a visit to federal court. (The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals ultimately sent the case back to the state courts, since the Tort Immunity Act is an Illinois, not a federal, law.) But his argument has remained consistent: The Rockford School Board's use of the tort tax in this manner amounts to taxation without representation. While the federal court can order the school district to implement programs to redress constitutional violations, it cannot order the method of funding those programs. Under Illinois law, the question of funding is left up to the voters, not the school board or the court.

The Rockford desegregation case has been driven by the greed of a Chicago lawyer who took a limited case, aimed at keeping a high school open on the west side of town, and turned it into a federal class-action lawsuit. O'Brien's case, on the other hand, has its roots in the school board's response to *People Who Care*. The idea to use the tort fund to pay for desegregation originated with the school board's own lawyers, who convinced the board that they could expand the district's budget by admitting guilt in the desegregation case. The same board members whose actions led to the desegregation lawsuit arrogated to themselves the authority to override the people's will and to raise their taxes without their consent. As Mike O'Brien argued in a presentation at the Heritage Foundation in 1996, the very existence of judicial taxation made the board's use of the tort fund almost inevitable:

> Not only does the court circumvent the electorate by evading the referendum process . . . It undermines the only protection the process offers, the adversary system, by making clear to the governmental entity that it will be better off guilty. A guilty verdict [e]nsures that the judge will increase the governmental unit's operating revenues and budgets. . . . a Rockford School Board member has asked . . . how the District will survive financially if it is ever unfortunate enough to achieve so-called unitary status [the legal term for the end of a desegregation suit and the return of schools to local control]. At that point the tort injury will have come to an end, but the dependency upon the judicial taxation will persist.

As O'Brien's case played itself out in the courts, a related battle was taking place in the political arena. Over the years, the composition of the Rockford School Board changed, and new board members objected to judicial taxation. But by that time, Magistrate P. Michael Mahoney had issued the Comprehensive Remedial Order (CRO), an elaborate social-engineering scheme designed to balance Rockford's schools racially through a $48-million building program, magnet schools, and direct court oversight of every aspect of District 205's operations. The magistrate also expressly ordered the board to use the tort levy to fund the CRO and threatened the members with jail time if they refused. Under protest, they agreed.

In February 1997, The Rockford Institute held the first of two informational rallies to address the issue of judicial taxation. On a bitterly cold and snowy Monday night, over 700 people packed the auditorium at the Rockford Woman's Club to hear *Chronicles*' editor Thomas Fleming and Rockford Congressman Don Manzullo explain the problems with judicial taxation. In the audience that night were Ted Biondo and Patti Delugas, both of whom would be elected to the school board the following November, largely because they vowed to end the use of the tort fund and fight judicial

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taxation. In February 1998, they, along with board member David Strommer, Mike O'Brien, and *Chronicles*' legal-affairs editor Stephen Presser joined Dr. Fleming and Representative Manzullo on the same stage, pledging never to give up the fight against judicial taxation.

In December 1998, the board members took their strongest stand ever by refusing to approve a tort-tax levy. Instead, they placed on the April 1999 ballot a referendum which would have replaced half of the tort tax—about $12 million—with a tax increase in the school district's general fund. The rest of the money would be made up through budget cuts in non-court-ordered programs. Board members could not offer any guarantee that, if the voters passed the referendum, the board wouldn't also levy a tort tax—perhaps under orders from the federal judge. Not surprisingly, the referendum was defeated two to one, at which point Biondo, fearing bankruptcy for the school district, switched sides, asking the federal magistrate to lift the Illinois deadline on tax levies so that he could switch his vote on the tort fund. (It was later revealed that, *even before the referendum was defeated*, the school board had privately instructed its lawyers to ask the magistrate to order the use of the tort fund should the referendum fail.)

In December 1999, Patti Delugas joined Ted Biondo in voting for the tort-tax levy. Both claimed publicly that they had no other option and denied that they had ever believed that the use of the tort fund was illegal. They also argued that the magistrate had never actually imposed judicial taxation, since the board members had always voted for the tort tax (even if they had done so under protest), and the magistrate had never invoked *Missouri* v. *Jenkins*, the 1990 U.S. Supreme Court ruling which has become the basis for federal judicial taxation, particularly in desegregation cases.

The prevarications of Biondo and Delugas confirmed another observation that Mike O'Brien had made at the Heritage Foundation in 1996:

> [B]ecause judicial taxes almost inevitably co-opt the local government and neutralize its adversarial resolve, they also tend to obscure precisely who is responsible for the taxes. Has the court ordered the taxes, or has the legislative body voluntarily voted for them because of concern for what the judge might do if the vote went the other way? . . . This judicial sleight of hand has been a major theme in Rockford . . . The simple truth is that local officials do not, indeed cannot, govern in the face of judicial taxation. They become more dependents of the federal court's largess than the democratic representatives of their constituency.

The defections of Biondo and Delugas meant that, for the first time in five years, the board had a pro-tort majority. The only hope for ending judicial taxation lay with the Illinois Supreme Court. When the dust had settled, Justice Michael Bilandic, a former Democratic mayor of Chicago, wrote the opinion for the majority, which upheld Mike O'Brien's objections to the tort-tax levy.

The decision was a model of judicial restraint and strict construction. The plain language of the Tort Immunity Act must be followed, Justice Bilandic argued; "compensatory damages" means a "monetary award paid to a person as compensation for loss or injury." Magistrate Mahoney's orders in *People Who Care:*

> clearly involve mandatory injunctive relief and not compensatory damages . . . Consequently, the Tort Immunity Act does not authorize the levying of taxes to fund desegregation remedies and to pay the debt service on general obligation bonds.

Longtime readers of *Chronicles* know that we have devoted more than a little ink to the Rockford school desegregation case these past four years. We may never have fully explained, however, why we believe it to be so important to the 99 percent of our readers who live somewhere else. Rockford, a demographic microcosm of the country at large, has long been viewed as an ideal test market for both big business *and* big government. On October 26, 2000, the nation dodged a bullet, yet the Illinois Supreme Court decision didn't even make national news. But what might have happened if the court had gone the other way?

Look at the list of those who filed *amicus curiae* briefs supporting a broad use of the tort fund: the Illinois Association of School Boards, the Illinois Association of School Administrators, the Chicago Board of Education, the Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Inc., the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, and the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois. If the Illinois Supreme Court had ruled in favor of these "friends of the court," local governmental bodies throughout Illinois—and before long, throughout the country—would have been deluged with lawsuits. As Mike O'Brien wrote in 1996:

> [I]f the tax levy provision of our state Tort Immunity Act is interpreted expansively to mean that . . . it can be used to fund . . . ongoing programs of court ordered spending in excess of state tax levy limits, then private litigants can circumvent the democratic process and transfer basic fiscal power and control away from our elected representatives and into our courts . . .

Some governmental bodies, facing a budget crunch, might even have invited litigation and then pled guilty so that they could open the floodgates of judicial taxation.

Despite the Illinois Supreme Court's ruling, the federal desegregation suit continues, and the magistrate has made it clear that he won't even consider returning the district to local control until at least 2006. Meanwhile, the specter of full-fledged federal judicial taxation looms on the horizon. If the school board can't present the federal court with a plan to fund the CRO, Magistrate Mahoney may issue a *Missouri* v. *Jenkins* order, raising our property taxes back up to where they were before the Illinois Supreme Court's ruling. He may be reluctant to do so, because the school board could appeal the case all the way up to the U.S. Supreme Court, which no longer appears to have a majority that favors either judicial taxation or racial quotas in desegregation. But if the magistrate can convince the board to *ask him* to issue the *Jenkins* order, then some legal experts believe that the school district could not appeal—and Michael O'Brien might not be able to, either. Already, Ted Biondo and Patti Delugas have indicated that they might vote for a *Jenkins* order, arguing that "We need to keep our options open" (read: "We need to keep the money flowing").

The fat lady may have sung in October, but the 800-pound gorilla is standing in the wings, waiting for his encore. c

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Letter From Venice

by Andrei Navrozov

The Visitors

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The first chill of autumn, which reminds us locals to order firewood from the mainland for our illegal fireplaces, is always a moment of reckoning. Not for nothing does the Russian Aesop, Krylov, in his fable of the socially responsible ant and the bohemian dragonfly, suggest that such a moment has arrived when a wintry blast gets in the eyes of the homeless idealist. In my own case, however, the fault is not entirely mine. It seems ages since I started looking for a new apartment, and ages since I began rehearsing the many explanations—some more interesting than "Well, you know, you have to pay the rent . . . "—of the difficulty of finding one. Last time, I described what it's like to try to wrest an apartment from a born-and-bred Venetian. Now, I'd like to suggest what happens when the owner of the house is a Venetian by adoption.

Let us unfold a little scenario that involves a socially well-connected visitor to Italy, with a cast of mind typical of what was once called the Fifth Avenue matron. Her daughter, who was at Brown, is an active supporter of Save Venice and has written about it in her alumni notes. Her younger brother, an antiques dealer in the Fulham Road in London, has just returned from Nencia Corsini's wedding in Florence. Her husband is an investment banker from Short Hills, New Jersey. They travel to Europe several times a year, know Italians with residences in Manhattan and Mayfair, have been to charity balls at the Palazzo Pisani Moretta, have stayed at the Cipriani, and are known to the waiters at Harry's Bar. Now they've bought a palazzo of their own, part of which they are thinking of renting out to suitable tenants. And here she is, just as she might appear in W, "Mrs. Matron in Valentino," in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio of the Ducal Palace, standing inquisitively before the famous black square substituting for the portrait of Marino Falier, with the inscription: "*Hic est locus Marini Falethri decapitati pro criminibus.*" Of the 76 doges represented here, only Falier's face is deleted for all eternity, for the alleged act of treason that got him beheaded in 1355.

Now, the Faliers have all died out in the last century, but the Palazzo Falier Canossa—now Palazzo Matrón—still stands on the Grand Canal, a witness to the family's history. Paolo Lucio Anafesto Falier was elected doge in Eraclea with the consent of Byzantium, followed by the family's three properly Venetian doges: Vitale, who built St. Mark's Basilica in its final form; Ordelaffo, who founded the shipyards of the Arsenale; and the unfortunate Marino. The story, as told by the chronicler Marin Sanudo, is that during a banquet at the Ducal Palace given by the 70-year-old doge and his young wife, Alvica Gradenigo, a young "new patrician" by the name of Michele Steno "made a nuisance of himself," whereupon the doge had him ejected. As he was leaving, Steno made a slanderous proclamation about the woman's virtue, whereupon he was arrested, tried, and sentenced to one month's imprisonment. The doge, interpreting the lightness of the sentence as a sign that his position was being undermined, conspired against Steno and the party of new patricians which supported him. The plot was discovered, the doge was beheaded, and all official records of the affair were destroyed. Alvica went mad and spent the rest of her life in seclusion.

What I relish imagining is Falier popping back into this world, suitcase in hand, through that famous black square. Obviously he needs an apartment to rent, at least until he can get his bearings, and at the new Venetian home of Mr. and Mrs. F.A. Matron there ensues the following brutal discussion:

MRS. MATRON: Who's who? I mean, how d'you do? So nice to meet you.

MARINO FALIER: I heard through the grapevine that you have a *piano nobile* I could have on a year's lease. Is that true?

MRS. MATRON: Would you like some coffee? (Rings for the Filipino.) Arthur, will you bring in the coffee, please. Do you know the Sammartini?

MARINO FALIER: Well, as you may have realized during your walk through the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, I'm not acquainted with very many people after the fateful year 1355. But naturally I can provide you with all the necessary banking references. And, as doge . . .

MRS. MATRON (impatiently): I know all that. But the Sammartini own Palazzo Pisani Moretta! We've been to some wonderful parties there, with all those flaming candles, and music, and gondolas . . . Jenny is a good friend. She is a fantastic decorator.

MARINO FALIER: My ancestor, Vitale . . .

MRS. MATRON: I'm afraid that name doesn't mean anything to me.

MARINO FALIER: Vitale consecrated St. Mark's. Doesn't that say something about our family's appetite for splendor? And a later ancestor, Ordelaffo, brought the Pala d'Oro to St. Mark's from Constantinople. It is probably the most famous decorative object in the world, with jewels *en cabochon* . . .

MRS. MATRON: I know all that. But did you attend the wedding of the young Princess Corsini in Florence? Everybody was there, and it's going to be in *Chi* magazine.

MARINO FALIER: You must pause to reflect that the social world of which you are speaking is alien to me. When my ancestor Anafesto was enthroned, *Chi* magazine did not exist. Florence didn't exist. Since then, the 120 doges of Venice, ending with the traitor Lodovico Manin who handed our country over to the French, came from just 59 families. Fifty-nine families in a thousand years. What

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do we care about princes and princesses? To us, the names to be revered belonged to those who freed Venice from Byzantium: Corner, Ipato, Bembo, Contarini, Morosini, Dandolo, Tiepolo, Gradenigo, Falier . . . All right, also people like Querini, Zorzi, Soranzo, Ziani, who later joined them. Then came the new patricians, and even though they proved to be my undoing, I accept those among them who were inscribed in the Golden Book at the close of the Great Council in 1297: Foscari, Loredan, Grimani, Barbarigo, Donà, Gritti, Marcello, Malipiero, Tron, Venier, Mocenigo . . . We could all have made ourselves princes and marquesses and counts and whatnot, but the only title a Venetian citizen may bear as properly his own is that of "*Nobil Homo.*" We used to believe this an appellation greater than that of many a king, and even three centuries after my birth Henry III of France, the last Valois, asked that he might be permitted to style himself a Venetian nobleman . . .

MRS. MATRON: I know all that, but now you expect to live in my . . . in your palazzo, and I'm not prepared . . . and frankly puzzled, because you're not really telling me anything. Do you know the Gradenigo family? My brother was staying at their house in the country last weekend. He was at Harvard with Giovanni. And Lucy, I hear, is a wonderful tennis player.

MARINO FALIER: My wife is of the family of Pietro Gradenigo. He became doge in 1289.

MRS. MATRON: But do you *know* them? I mean, do they *know* you?

MARINO FALIER: Er, well, my name, yes, but I'm afraid . . .

MRS. MATRON (businesslike): I'll have to speak with my husband, but I don't think we'll be renting out the apartment after all. I'm very sorry to have to cut this short, and it was a pleasure meeting you, but my daughter and I are going to an important meeting of Save Venice this afternoon, and I must get ready. It's being held at the home of the Steno family. You know their ancestor Michele became doge, too. In 1400, I think. Do you know them?

MARINO FALIER (killing her with an ornamental paperweight): Aargh!

As the curtain falls on my little vaudeville, I must add a couple of things. One is that almost all the living personages depicted therein are almost entirely my own spiteful inventions. The other is that, of course, I'm not Marino Falier returned from the dead, but in fact a reasonably eager and even accomplished social climber who would have Mrs. Matron, were I ever to run across such a perfectly formed representative of her social class, eating out of my hand. You want names, babycakes? I give you names. You want country weekends? You can have all the country weekends you want, the *week-ends* with a hyphen. You want hobnobbing with princes? Okay, here goes. Unfortunately, life is not vaudeville, and a perfectly formed representative of that social class is hard to find, which leaves me with Mrs. Matron's imperfectly formed, flawed, partial namesakes: German, French, Hungarian, English.

All of them, each in his or her own cluelessly snobbish way, manage to reenact the scene from the Tenth Canto of Dante's *Inferno*, when the old Ghibelline, Farinata degli Uberti, fixes the poet with his beady eye and demands to know, literally, who in hell he is:

Com' io al piè della sua tomba fui,
guardommi un poco, e poi, quasi sdegnoso,
mi dimandò: "Chi fuor li maggior tui?"
Io ch'era d'ubidir disideroso,
non lil celai, ma tutto lil'apersi . . .

And the harder I try to "conceal nothing and reveal all," the sorrier I feel for poor Marino Falier. *He* would never find an apartment in Venice.

Andrei Navrozov is Chronicles' *European editor.*

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Letter From England

by Derek Turner

Blair's War on Biology

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In the May 2000 issue of *Chronicles* ("Letter From England: New Gaybour"), I wrote that there was a good chance that Section 28 (the portion of the 1988 United Kingdom Local Government Bill that forbids the promotion of homosexuality among schoolchildren) would be retained through the current Parliament at least, because of the Labour Party's failure to push the repealing legislation through the House of Lords. *Mirabile dictu*, on July 24, their lordships—or rather, one ladyship, Baroness Young, who led the Tory opposition—came up trumps again, with a majority of 42 in favor of retaining the vexed clause.

This was a surprising result—or perhaps we conservatives are just accustomed to losing such battles. Faced with the prospect of having to drop the repeal legislation altogether in order to ensure the passage of the rest of the Local Government Act, Tony Blair had resorted to the time-dishonored tactic of stuffing the awkward legislative chamber with placemen. Since the last Lords defeat, 30 new Labour and Liberal Democratic peers have been appointed. This should have made the government victorious; in the end, however, there was a difference of only three votes, thanks to a revolt of 18 principled Labour peers and the absence of at least ten others when the vote was being taken.

But this war is far from over. Although the government says that it will not try to force the repeal of Section 28 in this session of Parliament, the wealthy and monomaniacal homosexual lobby will fight bitterly to ensure that it gets the result it wants. The government's options are either to introduce a short bill in the next session or to wait until after the next election, when the upper house has been fully "reformed."

If Labour wins the next general election, Section 28 will be scrapped—even if the majority of Tories stand firm. In any case, as more of Britain's powers are ceded to Brussels by Blair's Anglophobic government, it will become increasingly

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difficult for British politicians to take independent action on any issue. The European Union's record on this topic, as on so many others, is devoid of common sense. Under the E.U. Human Rights Act, which takes effect in Britain in October, schools could be sued for banning homosexual sex among pupils over 16.

The Section 28 debate exposed the divide between Britain's elites and those who foolishly vote for them. Members of our present ruling class believe that "equality" is an attainable goal, that there is no such thing as "normalcy," and that morals and sexual differences (not to mention national identities) are just random constructs which have no relevance—except during elections. They are convinced (ludicrously but, no doubt, "sincerely") that they are up against a "homophobic," "conservative," and "racist" (these three words are interchangeable, in leftist rhetoric) establishment from which all "minorities" need protection.

The attempt to repeal Section 28 is part and parcel of a general drive to equalize everyone down to the lowest common denominator. An article in the *Daily Telegraph* on February 10 bore the revealing headline: "Section 28 skirmish is prelude to a war on inequality." Journalist Rachel Sylvester pointed out that "The Blairites are trying to redefine equality as a pragmatic rather than a political thing"; as the Equal Opportunities Minister stated, "Economic prosperity depends on making the most of our most valuable resource—people. To do that, we must not discriminate." The mixture of economic reductionism and feminine sentiment is unappealing to both visceral Tories and the Old Left, but such views are likely to prove attractive to a certain kind of Tory for whom the free market is the be-all and end-all.

The same issue of the *Telegraph* reported that the Equal Opportunities Commission will draw up a code governing how companies should treat homosexual employees and their paramours on the questions of travel allowances and health insurance, and that officials at the Department of Health want to alter the meaning of "next of kin" to include homosexual partners. On February 14 came news that Royal Air Force cadets would be told that homosexuality is not damaging to morale.

On March 2, naive Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops, at the suggestion of the Bishop of Blackburn, reached a compromise agreement with Labour under which they would drop their opposition to Section 28's repeal in exchange for a commitment in the forthcoming Learning and Skills Bill to teach the importance of marriage and "stable relationships" in schools. Sharper-witted Tories noticed the worryingly anodyne expression "stable relationships," which will be taken to include homosexual relationships. The idea was also promptly attacked from the left—the health secretary and the minister for women both argued that concentrating on marriage would hinder the (long-running and futile) campaign against underage pregnancies, and the (homosexual) minister for culture, media and sport claimed that the proposed replacement was just as "bad." (The Tories defeated this amendment later in March.)

On March 6, at an election hustings, Tory mayoral candidate Steven Norris said that the police should turn a blind eye to cruising and discreet sex (the "extreme right-wing" William Hague of Labour mythology has just appointed Norris vice-chairman of the Conservative Party). On March 9, a poll in Sedgefield, County Durham (Tony Blair's constituency) revealed that 71 percent of adults, mostly Labour voters, want to retain the ban. Also in March, a debate on the subject split the Association of Teachers and Lecturers almost down the middle, with one delegate using the splendidly old-fashioned (but weak) argument that homosexuality "was one of the major concomitant parts of the decline and fall of major empires." On March 23, a prominent homosexual theologian was appointed as the new university "missioner" at Oxford. Stonewall, the homosexual group at the forefront of the battle to repeal Section 28, received almost £900,000 in lottery money, bringing the total amount of lottery money given to homosexual groups since April 1999 to £2.8 million.

Even with Section 28 on the books, homosexuals are getting their propaganda into schools. In schools for children from age 11 up, Berkshire Health Authority has circulated a newsletter (funded by the National Health Service) advertising homosexual pubs and websites, giving "cruising" tips, and inviting readers to take part in a homosexual "beauty contest." (Health authorities are not covered by Section 28, which only applies to local councils.) Christopher Booker, writing in the *Sunday Telegraph* in March, described Avon Health Authority's "teachers' pack," *A Practical Guide to Challenging Homophobia in Schools*, which gives guidelines for teachers who wish to encourage their students to act out various roles (such as "16 year old Asian lesbian," "male to female transgendered person," and "black disabled lesbian who is also a wheelchair user") and suggests that pupils should regard such figures as Quentin Crisp, George Michael, and "Pat in [the British soap opera] Eastenders" as positive role models. This gives the lie to Blair's February speech in which he said, "People are being told their children will have—what was it?—homosexual roleplaying in schools, it's nonsense" and that such things could never happen "not under this government. Not ever."

The motion to repeal Section 28 was passed easily by Blair's puppet Scottish Executive, whose members are fanatically determined to force metropolitan permissiveness on the generally conservative Scots that they recklessly ignored opinion polls. (Even 90 percent of school boards, institutions not normally regarded as conservative, wish to retain Section 28.) The Executive enthusiasts also insulted millionaire businessman Brian Souter's "Keep the Clause" campaigning group, saying that it is "homophobic" and refusing to recognize the moral force of Souter's privately funded ballot to all Scottish voters, which cost him £1.5 million. The referendum asked Scots to choose the statement with which they agreed: "I vote to retain Clause 28" or "I vote to repeal Clause 28." On May 31, the results were announced, with 86.8 percent (about 1 million) of the 32 percent who responded demanding the retention of Section 28. Souter's critics were delighted when a senior executive in his corporation was arrested in July for allegedly soliciting a male prostitute. There were complaints in June when Labour's Lord Alli used the House of Lords as a contact address when advertising for a chief executive for his new *Gay.com* venture.

New Home Office proposals announced in July are intended to equate homosexual and heterosexual behavior by removing laws, such as those on sodomy and "cottaging," that relate only to homosexuals. "A man and a man—or a woman and a woman—kissing or holding hands in public should no more be criminalized than a man and a woman behaving in the same way," say the re-

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port's authors.

But those who wish to strike at the root of biology and replace family life with multitudinous casual copulations are not having it all their way. In addition to Brian Souter's one-man crusade and the political campaigning of Lady Young, there has been resistance at other levels. Tory-controlled Kent County Council has banned the promotion of homosexuality in its schools and stated that marriage should be upheld "as the key building block of society," which would effectively negate the repeal of Section 28. Religious groups have also found a new unity of purpose. The entire affair has damaged Labour's family-friendly image.

The Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill, which would equalize the age of consent for homosexuals and heterosexuals, will return to the House of Lords for a final reading, having been defeated there twice before. It now faces the Parliament Act, whereby the Commons can pass laws over the opposition of the House of Lords, but Lady Young has promised to force a vote this time around. As she stated during the previous vote: "It is not about equality at all, it is about children, and as we all know 16 would in practice mean 14." The truth of this remark was confirmed when a militant homosexual, believing that the battle had already been won, declared: "Now we're going to go for 14!" Civilized, instinctively liberal-minded Britons may be beginning to understand the insatiable nature of "equality." Perhaps more of them will vote accordingly this time.

Derek Turner is the editor of Right NOW!, *published in London.*

Letter From Wisconsin

by Sean Scallon

Going Dutch

◆

I was disappointed. Here I was at "Let's Go Dutch" Days in the little western Wisconsin town of Baldwin, on an overcast August day, and I could not find any wooden shoes.

Sure, Dutch flags were flying on Main Street, and I doubted if I could find another police department in America that had Holland's national flag sewn into its patches, but I could not find one pair of wooden shoes, not even at the craft booths next to the city park. What good is a festival celebrating a town's Dutch heritage without wooden shoes?

I bumped into one of the Klompen Dancers while following the parade down Main Street.

"Oh, there used to be a fellow who came down here and gave demonstrations on how they were made," she replied. "But he hasn't come down in a while."

She, however, was wearing a homemade pair. Dressed in authentic costume, she and other members of the Klompen Dancers, the guardians of Dutch heritage in Baldwin, had just performed at Bailey Park. My faith was slowly being restored. She wore several layers of wool socks to protect herself from the wooden shoe's biggest drawback.

"You have to wear a lot on your feet to keep the blisters away," she said, noting that wooden shoes were not exactly made for comfort. "The dancing can be pretty strenuous, so you have to be well prepared."

The Klompen Dancers stood out in their Dutch folk costumes. It's hard to be unique these days, when American culture demands that everyone become homogenized, standardized, and prepackaged. Even in Baldwin, the New World Order creeps in from the interstate corridors like a kudzu vine. Yet, according to my Klompen Dancer friend, "Let's Go Dutch" Days succeeds in Baldwin, while so many ideas for small-town Wisconsin festivals fail.

Festival season in Wisconsin is year-round. Some towns organize their three-day parties around a particular landmark; others, a famous (locally, anyway) person or historic event. Some just celebrate themselves for being on the map. You'll find the standard festival fare of games, carnival rides, local bands and dances, food and flea markets, fireworks, tractor pulls, fishing derbies, parades, contests, and tournaments, along with the obligatory beauty pageant. Most festivals are sponsored by the local chamber of commerce, so the object is to fill the coffers of business.

There are nearly 100 annual celebrations like "Let's Go Dutch" Days in Wisconsin, including William Tell Days in the Swiss village of New Glarus, *Syttende Mai* celebrations in the Norwegian towns, Oktoberfests in German communities, and the famous Polka Fest in the Polish enclave of Pulaski. Most are either German, the state's largest ethnic group, or Indian powwows. Milwaukee leads the pack with 13. There are five Dutch festivals in addition to the one in Baldwin.

It has been said that the United States is a reflection of Europe: The East Coast is like Ireland, Britain, and France; the South resembles the Mediterranean lands of Italy, Spain, and the Balkans; the Rust Belt and Great Lakes are similar to the Ruhr Valley and Silesia; and the Upper Midwest is a mirror image of Scandinavia.

Our neighbor Minnesota is almost uniformly Scandinavian, but it's as if someone tried to draw a mini-map of Europe within the borders of Wisconsin. In every corner of the state, in virtually every city, small town, village, or crossroad, diverse European settlements were established. Valmy, Brussels, Namur, Belgium, Stockholm, Lund, Monico, Neva, Krakow, Zachow, Poinatowski, Sobieski, Lublin, Argyle, Somerset, Sussex, Wittenberg, Berlin, New Berlin, New London, Poskin, Hamburg, Germania, Denmark, Genoa, Rubicon, French Island, Caledonia, Luxemburg, Polonia, Pilsen, Kiel, Erin, Loretto, Dorchester, and Rhinelander: It's as if the immigrants never left their native lands.

In Milwaukee, Madison, Green Bay, and Racine, every neighborhood—the small town within the city—seems to have its own ethnic identity. Each has its cornerstone, a church or a community center like Serb Hall in Milwaukee. The immigrants all came here for the same reasons—freedom, work, and cheap land—displacing the Yankee settlers who arrived after the British, French, and Indians.

I may have been a little too hard on Baldwin. After all, if it weren't for businesses such as the Dutch Oven, Van's Break Service, Lubin's Builders, Wynveen's Auto Repair, Heebink's Wooden Farm Products, and Jan-Zee's Bar, there probably wouldn't be a Dutch Days festival.

When I drive through Baldwin, it seems as if every second home has a miniature windmill. A larger replica can be found at Windmill Park. The symbol of the town graces the festival's posters, the local newspaper's masthead, and even a Main Street storefront, surrounded by tulips and little Dutch boys and girls. The town may not be Rotterdam,

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but at least Miss Baldwin fits the profile of a Dutch beauty. Her name is Sarah Vande Berg.

After visiting Baldwin, I drove a few miles north in search of an Orthodox church that was the center of a Russian settlement in southwest Barron County, not far from the little hamlet of Clayton. I discovered it in *The Atlas of Wisconsin Culture*, a book my father received for Christmas.

The church was not easy to find. I roamed the backroads, paved and unpaved. Only after an extensive search did I find the light-blue onion dome of Holy Trinity Church. But maybe that is the point: Out here, surrounded by farm fields and rolled haystacks, woods and small streams, you could easily imagine yourself back in the old country. This is not a suburban church designed for four-lane roads, eight-light traffic stops, and acres of parking spaces: It was designed to anchor a people.

Nothing could feel more peaceful than to be out in the middle of nowhere with the sun peeking through the clouds and the soft, cool breezes blowing through the pine trees in the cemetery. The Orthodox double cross was carved into the stones. Some of the names were written in Cyrillic. I wanted to see the holy icons inside the church, but it was locked. Over 100 parishioners come here, miles from their homes, to one of only three Orthodox churches in northwest Wisconsin and Minnesota. They want to protect what their ancestors built in 1902.

I noticed that one of the headstones read "Dzubay," which happens to be the name of the publisher of the newspaper I work for. When I first met him, I saw the name and the icons in his office and deduced "Orthodox," but I assumed that he went to one of those inner-city ethnic churches in Minneapolis. When I bumped into him at a recent county fair and told him about the headstone, his face lit up as he recounted his family's history from the Carpathians to western Wisconsin, how and when the church was built, that his uncle used to be the priest at a similar church in Cornucopia on the shore of Lake Superior, and that, up to 20 years ago, the liturgies used to be conducted in Russian. He even invited me to a dinner service the church was holding the following month.

Some of the family names I found in the cemetery are still found in the area, but obviously this wasn't Rostov-on-Don, just as Baldwin wasn't Amsterdam (thank God) or The Hague. Time, change, and the forces of intermarriage, rootlessness, and globalization have altered these enclaves as they have the nation. And yet . . .

"You had the Dutch in Baldwin, Norwegians in Woodville, and the Irish in Hammond," my Klompen Dancer friend told me. "But now it's gotten a little mixed up."

Indeed. Her name was Eileen Helgeson, not exactly a Dutch name, and she was from Woodville. When she saw her granddaughter on a Woodville float, a replica of a Viking warship, she waved and called out loudly. As she did, a young Hmong girl walked by. Like Eileen, she was somewhat out of place in her Dutch costume and wooden shoes.

"They're taking in anyone they can," Helgeson said of the Klompen Dancers.

It seems that the entire country feels the same way. Wisconsin and the Upper Midwest aren't immune: Mexicans are making their way up to the southeast and Milwaukee, while the Hmong inhabit such midsize northern cities as La Crosse, Eau Claire, Wausau, Appleton, and Green Bay.

But Wisconsin remains a European state; that's arguably not true of California, Florida, Texas, New York, and the great population centers of America. If we in the Upper Midwest become any-

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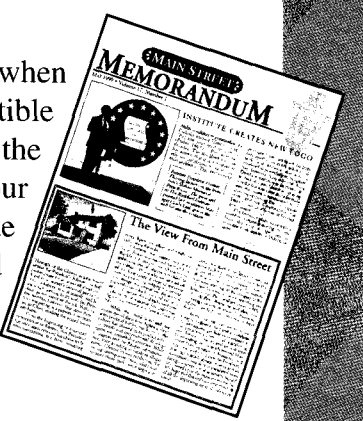

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thing in the next century, it may be the last bastion of resistance to the forces of unlimited immigration—so long as places like Baldwin keep having "Let's Go Dutch" Days.

One sign of hope: Eileen, in her 70's, was the oldest member of the Klompen Dancers.

Sean Scallon is a reporter for a weekly newspaper in Ellsworth, Wisconsin.

Letter From Russia

by Denis Petrov

When Will It Snow Again?

◆

It's late September in Russia, and Muscovites are already placing wagers on when the first snow will come. The weather has simply been too good to be true; the sun has been shining and the temperatures mild, which, to the Russian mind at least, is a bad sign. The Russians have never trusted good fortune or happiness, and they naturally suspect that the pleasant weather is simply serpentine fate toying with them, instilling uncharacteristic optimism in Russia's heart, while waiting to turn on her eventually, striking like a stealthy adder. In Russia, life and history are merely a series of disasters broken up by brief periods of quiet.

Some Russians have already been reminded of their cruel fate. The fire at the gigantic Ostankino TV tower, which temporarily knocked out Russian television; the *Kursk* tragedy (as well as the clumsy cover-up by the usual bureaucratic suspects); the endless war in Chechnya; and the bombing in the pedestrian tunnel at Moscow's Pushkin Square have killed the hope some Russians had for their future. The "system," they believe, has outlived the series of rogues and fools who have occupied the Kremlin, and it will inevitably defeat any attempts to change it. For many others, however, hope—tempered by foreboding—remains. For the first time in anyone's memory, a man who appears to be generally competent sits in the Kremlin. By Russian standards, he is even relatively clean, probably having stolen no more than his rank allowed on his climb to the top. Even his loyalty to the Yeltsin "family" may be a good sign, since betrayal is the usual currency of Russian politics. The Russians who remain hopeful don't blame Vladimir Putin for the recent spate of disasters—at least, not yet. Give him time, they say; maybe things will get better. But the doubts remain.

On a bright, sunny day at a park overlooking the Moscow River, with the walls of a 16th-century church towering above the trees, I share a drink with a friend, and we speak of Russia and the Russians. In the past, he has identified himself with the "democrats," but he has become increasingly patriotic, his hopes for "democracy" failing, perhaps, just as his faith in the West did. He is hopeful: True, Putin has not gone after certain oligarchs who appear to be untouchable, but maybe he is biding his time, waiting for the right moment. Putin might be able to combine elements of Westernization with patriotism, something most Russians seem to want. I express my doubts about Putin, who was brought to power by the "family," riding a wave of public anger after last year's terrorist bombings, which the Kremlin blamed on the Chechens. Circumstantial evidence suggests, however, that the Kremlin had a hand in the affair. The special services did not attempt to stop the Chechens, and the Russian military appears to have had foreknowledge of the Chechen plan to reignite the war in the Caucasus. My friend lights a smoke and says that I have very high standards; Russians expect lies and political games. In any event, it may all come to nothing: Russians have never had a strong work ethic, and many now make their livings by selling vodka and candy bars in the markets. How can Putin, whose admiration for Peter the Great and German culture is well known, make Germans out of them? My friend gazes at the river, wondering if it is too late for Russia.

Everywhere there is hope and disappointment, and the suspicion that all good signs are harbingers of disaster. A "patriot" friend, who voted for national communist Gennadi Zyuganov in the last election, is also hopeful: Putin is standing up to the West; the days of grovcling under that drunkard Yeltsin are over. Putin will destroy the oligarchs and finish off the Chechen rebels. At least, he might.

Another patriotic acquaintance, however, is less optimistic. Yes, Putin has more or less subsumed the patriotic movement and is giving them some of what they want—but not all. He suspects that Putin is too dependent on Western aid and is merely using the patriots. Putin acknowledges Russia's demographic problem (the population is declining by nearly a million people a year), but he does not appear to understand the depth of Russia's crisis, which is more one of spirit than of economics or politics. "We only have one generation to save ourselves," my acquaintance sighs. He is one of the few patriots who opposes the war in Chechnya. Russia cannot afford to lose her young men, but the patriotic movement on the whole supports the war, and he has no alternative but to work within it.

I walk down Tverskaya Ulitsa from the Kremlin to Pushkin Square and pause before entering the pedestrian tunnel. Officially, the authorities say that the Pushkin Square bombing, which killed and injured dozens of people, was part of a struggle between mafia groups for control over the tunnel kiosk trade in everything from TV sets to vodka and cigarettes. Most Muscovites, however, are certain it was the work of Chechens. A crowd has gathered in front of a makeshift memorial to the victims of the bombing. The people pray, light candles, and gather to read the poems posted on the walls of the tunnel. They are lamentations, cries for retribution, yearnings for order, and, in a very few cases, pleas for Russia not to give in to despair and hatred. One is sad:

> You see I'm crying again
> My tears flow freely.
> They've stolen my friends from me

Another is angry:

> I long for the Iron Curtain,
> When traitors were punished
> And Moscow was not torn apart

Another laments Russian impotence:

> Nash your teeth Russia
> They are betraying us once more.

One even calls for an end to the war in Chechnya:

> The killing must stop
> Do we need this war?

An old man complains to me that his son is lazy and only comes home when

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he is hungry. The thieves run everything, he says, and Putin's attempts at restoring order appear halfhearted. What Russia needs is another Stalin. I can only sigh. A rich, poor, sad, lively, foreboding, hospitable country. What would Russia be without poetry?

I leave the window open in my hotel room and sit down to read the newspapers. The stories are about oligarch/Kremlin machinations and the good fortune Russia enjoys in high oil prices; about the debate over whether the *Kursk* will be raised or left as a sailor's grave; about contract murders; about an illiterate old peasant who walks from village to village, reciting his poetry from memory and entertaining passersby. He is happy in his own way, a latter-day holy fool, loved by his neighbors. Poetry again.

I turn on the TV. Another paradox: Putin has met with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Some of the great writer's friends are shocked by the meeting of the ex-KGB operative and the former exile/dissident, but I detect in Solzhenitsyn's comments some of the same hope expressed by other Russians since Yeltsin's departure: Somehow, Russia will beat the odds and survive. Although critical of some of Putin's policies, he wants to keep the door open to the Kremlin. I suspect Solzhenitsyn is aware that he is being used by Putin to deflect criticism of threats to the freedoms gained since the fall of the Soviet empire.

The news is over. The weather report says that the sunny days will end soon. The Russians are expecting snow.

Denis Petrov has many Russian friends, and they are all poets.

Letter From Tennessee

by Clark Stooksbury

Remembering

◆

Tazwell is a town in Claiborne County, Tennessee, about 45 minutes northeast of Knoxville on Highway 33, just south of the Kentucky border. On the muggy Saturday morning of June 3, 2000—the 192nd anniversary of the birth of Jefferson Davis and Confederate Memorial Day in Tennessee—some 200 people gathered in Tazwell's Irish Cemetery to rededicate a Confederate monument. After reading about this forthcoming event in the *Knoxville New Sentinel*, I decided to brave the rolling hills and winding roads of Union County, which lies between Knoxville and Claiborne Counties. By the time I crossed Norris Lake (an FDR creation), my head was spinning. But since I was almost to Tazwell, I decided to continue.

Irish Cemetery sits on a hill a couple of blocks off Highway 33. Looking south, you can see the four-lane highway and the golden arches of McDonald's; otherwise, the green, rolling hills of Tennessee visible through the light haze that morning formed an appropriately premodern vista for a ceremony that was out of tune with the times. At the top of the hill, past a wrought-iron gate, stands the Confederate monument, an 18-foot-tall stone obelisk capped with an artillery shell. An inscription reads: "SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF UNKNOWN CONFEDERATE DEAD WHO LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES AMONG STRANGERS FOR THE LOST CAUSE." Details of the monument's origin are unknown, but a notice in a 1915 issue of *Confederate Veteran* mentioned that, "in the Irish Cemetery at the place, near Cumberland Gap, there are about thirty graves of Confederate Soldiers who died in the hospital there, with nothing to show who they were except that on one rough limestone headstone is cut 'C.D.S.'" Over the years, the monument fell into disrepair; eventually, it collapsed during a 1998 ice storm. Last year, members of the Knoxville-based Longstreet-Zollicoffer and the Morristown Bradford-Rose camps of the Sons of Confederate Veterans began restoring the structure.

Confederate monuments are not the norm in East Tennessee; the area was strongly Unionist during the war. When the state left the Union in 1861, many in the east wanted to break with Tennessee. But the *Encyclopedia of East Tennessee* states that a "sufficient number of East Tennesseans supported the Confederacy to create a civil war within a civil war." *Our Union County Heritage* features several photographs of Union County Confederates and a tombstone displaying the sort of sectional bitterness that warms the hearts of the unreconstructed:

MAJOR ALLEN HURST
SON OF JOHN & ELIZABETH
THOMPSON HURST
MARCH 4, 1810 TAZWELL CO. VA.
MAY 26 1873.
FIRST CIRCUIT COURT CLERK
OF UNION CO.
DURING RECONSTRUCTION DAYS
ROBBED BY THE CARPET
BAGGERS OF 4000 ACRES OF LAND.
60 ODD YEARS LATER T.V.A.
CONFISCATED SEVERAL
THOUSAND ACRES OF MINERAL
LAND LEFT TO HIS
GRAND CHILDREN
GONE WITH THE WIND

Southerners began commemorating their dead almost immediately after the war. Over the years, Southern states created various official holidays; several eventually adopted June 3 as Confederate Memorial Day. (Tennessee chose this date in 1902.) In *Dixie After the War*, reconstruction chronicler Myrta Lockett Avary recounted the first such observance to take place in Richmond in 1866:

> The young men of Richmond, the flower of the city, marched to Hollywood [cemetery], armed with picks and spades, and numbering in their long line, . . . remnants of famous companies, whose gallantry had made them shining marks on many a desperate battlefield . . . As the soldier-citizens marched along, people old and young, by ones and twos and threes, or in organised bodies, fell into the ever-lengthening line . . . Federal soldiers walking the quiet streets would pause and study these symbols of grief and reverence. Carloads of flowers poured into the city . . . maids, matrons and children met there early to weave blossoms and greenery into stars, crosses, crowns and flags—their beloved Southern cross . . .
>
> Thousands visited the green hillside where General Jeb Stuart lay, a simple wooden board marking the spot; his grave was a mound of flowers. From an improvised niche of evergreens, Valentine's life-like bust of the gay chevalier smiled upon old friends. No Hero, great or lowly, was forgotten. What a tale of broken hearts and desolate homes far away the many graves told! Here had the Texas Ranger ended

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his march; here had brave lads from the Land of Flowers and all the states intervening bivouacked for a long, long night, from whose slumbers no bugle might wake them.

The events in Tazwell in the year 2000 could not match those in the fallen Confederate capital in 1866. That ceremony involved the whole community, which had yet to recover from the devastation of war. There were living Confederate veterans and occupying federal soldiers participating and observing. Irish Cemetery inters no one as celebrated as Jeb Stuart or any of the other Confederate generals who, in later years, would be buried at Hollywood. Nor did Irish Cemetery host thousands of mourners on this Saturday morning. Presumably, the great majority of people munching on Egg McMuffins at McDonald's or biscuits and gravy at the nearby Hardees, both just a stone's throw away from the cemetery, had no clue what was occurring there.

The ceremony was scheduled for 11:00 A.M., rain or shine. I arrived shortly after ten, and there were already several dozen people on hand, including a ragtag but well-fed squad of Confederate reenactors who would form an honor guard and march up to the monument to begin the ceremony, some black-veiled ladies, and the Men From Dixie singing group (also in gray uniforms). Aside from those in costume, the crowd looked normal. A few were dressed up, but most were casual and as comfortable as they could make themselves in the early June heat and humidity.

Members of a Boy Scout troop milled about, passing out programs and tiny Confederate Battle Flags and directing traffic. I went on a brief walking tour of the cemetery in search of relatives (I found none) and marked Confederate graves. While I was examining the tombstone of Shadrack Pressnell of Company D, 3rd Corps of Engineers, CSA, one of his descendants told me that the grave had just been discovered by another family member, and a Confederate marker only recently placed there below the tombstone. Just below his grave was one for William D. Thomas of I Company, Virginia Cavalry. His Confederate marker appeared to be decades old. For the ceremony, the SCV cleaned and decorated the graves of veterans of both the United States and the Confederate States.

After my tour, one of the Boy Scout leaders introduced me to Randall Lee Bailey, who has visited the monument since his boyhood and spearheaded its restoration. While I stood beside his truck, an elderly gentleman sitting in the passenger seat eyed me suspiciously and asked, "Who you with?" I told him that I was unaffiliated (not my exact words). I then requested a media kit and said that I planned to write an article about the event. Again, the passenger interjected, "Who for?" I briefly described *Chronicles*, which they had not heard of, and its editor's affiliation with the League of the South, which they had.

The ceremony began promptly at 11:00 with a procession of the honor guard followed by a presentation and explanation of Confederate flags—the Bonnie Blue Flag, the First National Flag (Stars and Bars), Second National (Stainless Banner), and the Third National, along with various Saint Andrew's Cross battle flags, including a blue one with a white cross—the Battle Flag of the Department of East Tennessee.

The keynote speaker was Lowell Lynch, a retired teacher from Tazwell. Lynch promised not to go on for too long, telling his former students in the audience that he only talked about history for an hour at a time when he was paid to do so. Nonetheless, his ability to talk outpaced my desire to listen, so I cut class in order to seek refreshment and check out the cars for interesting bumper stickers and license plates. I saw nothing racist or inflammatory, so I presumed that there were no FBI or Southern Poverty Law Center spies on hand. When I returned, Lynch was reflecting on the NAACP's campaign against the Confederate Battle Flag, which once flew above the South Carolina Capitol. He attributed the organization's campaign to its desire to remain relevant after having achieved most of its goals and repeatedly being mired in scandal.

Other highlights of the rededication service included the Men From Dixie performing the hymn "Uncloudy Day" and, of course, "Dixie." If the crowd failed to sing loudly enough that our voices could be heard in the nearby homes (as the group's leader had exhorted us to do), the Confederate Honor Guard made up for it later with their rifle salute. The volleys surely caused a couple of the neighbors to spill coffee on the Saturday paper.

The commanders of the two camps recognized a handful of visiting dignitaries and read congratulations and proclamations sent by such luminaries as Gov. Don Sundquist and Sen. Fred Thompson. At the end of the service, attendees were encouraged to place wildflowers at the approximate site of the Confederate graves, some feet behind the monument, and several people did.

For about 90 minutes, I was transported decades back in time. Except for the obvious reminders of modernity—camcorders, casual clothing—this event would have been more at home in the year 1900 than in Y2K. But all good anachronisms must come to an end, especially when it is so hot outside. I found Mr. Bailey, the man who saw to the monument's restoration, and gave him the copy of *Chronicles* that I had promised him. After exchanging a bit of family background with the gentleman who had earlier interrogated me—he surmised that we were probably about 300th cousins—I decided to return to the modern world. I climbed in my truck and quickly turned on the air conditioning. Driving past the Golden Arches, I knew I had arrived.

Clark Stooksbury writes from Knoxville, Tennessee.

LIBERAL ARTS

ROMEO, THE GAY BLADE

"Imagine four prep school boys in white shirts and black ties reciting '*Romeo and Juliet*' like adolescents reading *Playboy*. This is the premise for '*Shakespeare's R&J*,' a subversive and sexy adaptation by Joe Calarco.

"Calarco's novel interpretation of Shakespeare's classic tragedy depicts four repressed prep school boys. The boys gather secretly one evening to act out all the parts in '*Romeo and Juliet*.' What they discover is their own vulnerability to the themes of forbidden love, prejudice, homophobia, and the universal fear of first love. Calarco's imaginative directing highlights not only the homoerotic aspects of the work, but the universally dangerous and romantic elements of the play."

—from a Chicago Shakespeare Theater press release

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by Srdja Trifkovic

NATO, R.I.P.

At the European Union summit in Nice last December France initiated plans for a new European military structure. While the stated purpose of the emerging 15-member alliance is to complement NATO rather than replace it, there is growing concern in Washington that the ultimate objective of French and German strategic planners is to sever the trans-Atlantic military cord altogether. With most key European countries fully committed to the project—in which the completion of a 60,000-strong European rapid-reaction force is but the first step—the future of NATO appears uncertain.

That is good news. Combined, the countries of the European Union have a greater population and GNP than the United States, and the E.U. is politically, technologically, and financially equipped to take care of itself. Some 300,000 American servicemen are still in Western Europe for no apparent reason, and their return home would save over five billion dollars each year. Cries of anguish from Washington, where no European defense initiative is acceptable unless it is explicitly subordinate to NATO, come mainly from Cold War obsessives who have never been able to explain why we should strive to preserve a military alliance that has outlived its usefulness.

Institutions tend to be self-perpetuating, and bureaucracies self-serving. NATO is no exception, of course, but a decade after the implosion of the Soviet Union, its advocates have not been able to come up with a convincing justification for its continued existence. It is an unnecessary drain on American taxpayers. Its costly "out-of-area" forays into the Balkans have been either mistaken (Bosnia) or outright criminal (Kosovo), underscoring the alliance's lack of real purpose. Its mindless eastward expansion has unnecessarily alienated Russia, while bringing no benefits of any kind—political, financial, or strategic—to its original members, America included.

It is hard to believe that, less than two years ago, the Beltway cabal of "NATO forever" enthusiasts seemed firmly in control as the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland formally joined its ranks at a ceremony in Independence, Missouri. Their sights were set not only on the Balkans but on the three Baltic states, on Ukraine, and even on the Caspian basin. Their geopolitical objective was to encircle Russia, to let the Europeans know who is calling the shots, and to enjoy that heady buzz, the insatiable hubris of "Benevolent Global Hegemony."

By last spring, there were already clear signs in Europe that further eastward expansion of NATO would be resisted on both practical and political grounds. In purely technical terms, the three former Soviet Pact armies turned out to be poorly equipped and almost impossible to integrate into the alliance's command-and-control structure. "Interoperability"—the bedrock of NATO military doctrine—could not be applied to the new members. The problem was compounded by the growing opposition in those countries to massive spending on American weaponry in the absence of any credible threat.

At the same time, some influential Europeans—notably French and German E.U. officials—proved loath to antagonize Moscow further. The Russians naturally saw NATO enlargement as a threat, and this impression was confirmed by the attack on Serbia. Further enlargement would be an open challenge that Vladimir Putin could not afford either to ignore or to accept meekly like his bungling predecessor. While there are inveterate Russophobes in Washington smarting for a showdown, their enthusiasm was not shared by those who would be most at risk if we were to ignite a new cold war.

The most significant source of European doubts about NATO, and the subsequent search for an independent defense structure, was the bombing of Serbia. During those 78 days in the spring of 1999, it became obvious that decisionmaking within NATO had become more centralized than during the Cold War. While preserving the appearance of unity, the Clinton administration could not prevent the soul-searching that went on in many European capitals. As a result, it is no longer deemed risky for Eurocrats to argue that NATO should have been abolished after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, and the collapse of the Soviet Union.

America should quit dragging its feet and take the lead in wrapping up NATO and securing the defense of its interests outside all entangling alliances. The preservation of NATO after the end of the Cold War and its subsequent enlargement over the last decade has had a destabilizing effect not only on Europe but on the nature of America's long-term relationship with Russia and the emerging powers in Asia. George Kennan rightly called it "the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-Cold War era." The resulting quest for new missions has turned NATO into an aggressive tool of interventionist hegemony and an organization tainted by criminality. Its existence is devoid of any strategic logic, military necessity, or ideological merit.

After the Nice summit we may see more than rhetorical grandstanding and posturing: If Europe is seriously preparing a military structure to replace NATO, it will have to invest countless additional billions into defense. It is in America's national interest to have a strong, friendly, self-reliant Europe, no longer in need of American nuclear umbrellas and conventional hardware; whether the wishy-washy Third Wave socialists who rule the Old Continent have the political will to put their money where their mouth is remains to be seen. c

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GOVERNMENT

Uncle Sam *Still* Wants You

by Greg Kaza

"The draft or draft registration destroys the very values that our society is committed to defending," Ronald Reagan wrote U.S. Sen. Mark Hatfield in May 1980. Although few remember it today, Republican Richard Nixon ended conscription in 1973, and Reagan campaigned against registration, pledging to Hatfield and others that he would end it if elected president. Following the declaration of martial law in Poland in 1981, he reneged on his promise. Two decades later, registration and the Selective Service System still exist, Cold War anachronisms and grim reminders of the failure of Beltway Republicans to exercise the spoils of electoral victory by keeping their promise to voters to abolish outdated federal programs.

At the peak of the Vietnam War, economists (most notably Milton Friedman) argued that the draft should be ended in favor of an all-volunteer force (AVF). Conscription has rarely been used in the United States, and for good reason. Daniel Webster railed against it during the War of 1812; there were massive anti-draft riots in New York during the Civil War. Conscription was instituted during World War I, but public opposition forced its end after the conflict. Midwestern Old Right opposition to the draft remained intense up until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Old Right leaders such as U.S. Sen. Robert Taft (R-OH) and Rep. Howard Buffett (R-NE) led the fight to abolish conscription after the war. Until Vietnam, the conservative and libertarian right regarded military conscription as an attack upon individual liberty and a tool of Democratic presidents, such as Lyndon Johnson, bent on pursuing imperialistic foreign adventures.

Nixon cleverly diffused the anti-Vietnam War movement, led by the New Left, by adopting Friedman's AVF proposal. More than a quarter-century later, nobody—save a few career bureaucrats at Selective Service—argues for a return to the military draft, although William F. Buckley, in his book "Gratitude: Reflections on What We Owe Our Country" (1990), has made a case for national service.

While universal national service is common in Europe, it has been viewed as a form of slavery throughout America's history. Not surprisingly, Buckley has been joined in his call by liberals who wish to impose national service in order to achieve their social aims. The idea is especially popular among liberal educators and other government planners who see it as an answer to social problems. Instead of drafting young men—and women—into the military, they demand social conscription to fight for a cleaner environment, jobs in depressed urban areas, and other liberal panaceas. Ironically, some of today's advocates of social conscription for youth vehemently opposed the military draft during Vietnam.

Today, registration is a Cold War anachronism that requires young men to sign up within 30 days of their 18th birthdays. The government can deny federal jobs and college loans to non-registrants. The Selective Service is the only surviving part of Jimmy Carter's election-year response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; the grain embargo and the Olympic boycott have been reduced to answers in the "Carter Malaise" category on *Jeopardy*. Fellow Democrat Bill Clinton—whose own Vietnam-era experience with the draft is well documented—has tread more carefully, despite a March 1994 Pentagon report that found that the $29-million Selective Service program could be safely scrapped "without irreparable damage to national security" (since today's wars are too brief for conscription to make a difference). Clinton has avoided the issue of national service lest he appear hypocritical, preferring the registration status quo to charges from Beltway Republicans that he is "soft on military preparedness."

During his eight years in office, Clinton cited three reasons for retaining the Selective Service program: Registration constitutes a "relatively low-cost insurance policy"; ending registration could send the "wrong signal" to potential enemies; and registration can help to "maintain the link between the AVF and society at large." Cato Institute policy analyst Doug Bandow notes that all three arguments lack credibility. Registration was intended to generate, in a short period of time, a large conscript army for a protracted war. Today, that type of conflict is unlikely to occur. America's military credibility rests on highly skilled personnel and advanced weaponry, not a list of potential conscripts. Moreover, merely signing a draft card does not instill patriotism in youth. Bandow, who served in the Reagan administration, sees registration an example of Beltway "institutional immortality."

U.S. Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX), a former Air Force flight surgeon, has led the fight on Capitol Hill in recent years to abolish draft registration. Paul amended a House appropriations bill to strike $24 million in funding for Selective Service. His measure passed the House, but the funding was restored in late 1999 by the Republican-controlled Senate. The agency will live to see another fiscal year, as will the federal Education and Energy Departments, which Ronald Reagan also pledged to abolish, and the Commerce Department, which was targeted for extinction by the Republican freshman class of 1994 but is still wasting tax dollars six years later. If the mixed results of the November election are any indication, Americans may finally be asking themselves why they should vote for candidates who do not keep their promises once they obtain political power.

Greg Kaza served three terms in the Michigan House of Representatives. He recently returned to his native Midwest after spending a year on Capitol Hill analyzing the voting patterns of members of Congress.

The Road to Brussels

by Brian Kirkpatrick

I should have been prepared. My Brazilian student had already expressed his admiration for Fidel Castro and the glories of the Cuban healthcare system. Still, his next comment nearly made me swerve off the road as we drove back from lunch.

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"Of course, some day, there will be a world government."

"That would be a catastrophe," I sputtered.

"Well, when we have evolved enough socially," he said.

In other words, never? I wanted to say. Instead, I bit my tongue. I was sure I was right, but I couldn't articulate the reasons. "A catastrophe," was all I could choke out. "An absolute catastrophe."

I've learned not to talk politics with him—he has a decent scientific mind, but when it comes to politics, he doesn't like to examine his beliefs—so I let the topic go. My inability to gather my wits enough to say why I was so sure was due in part to his timing: A few days before our conversation, Undersecretary of State Strobe Talbott had made much the same declaration, predicting the arrival of world government in the 21st century. Talbott and his ilk are good at portraying themselves as a valiant vanguard, heroically overturning the stupidity of the past, so the idea is likely to continue to irritate us, like ants we can't quite clear out of the kitchen. But why, exactly, is world government such a catastrophic idea? What should I have been able to say to my friend?

We could laugh and dismiss the idea as impractical. A power that pushes for world unity would have to result to force to reach that goal. It's absurd to think that such countries as China, Iran, India, or Russia would accept world government in my lifetime or that of my young friend, and should those powers be unduly pressured, they are likely to respond in ways much less pleasant than laughter. The high-minded adventures we have seen in Kosovo, Bosnia, and Somalia would never cease, because human nature will not be overturned by an edict, even if it issues from Brussels. The advocates of world government have already shown little compunction about killing Iraqi children or Serbian civilians.

Should a power manage to achieve hegemony, the ends to which its force would be directed are predictable. There would be proscribed ideas, some of them evil, but many not. As every government has its pets and enemies, there would be favored groups—ethnic, religious, or ideological. And what government rewards its pets and punishes its enemies in ways that the angels could approve?

The dream of world government is based on false assumptions. Talbott described national governments as "artificial." This is a hugely, perhaps willfully ignorant stance, since Burke's examination of the organic growth and change of government has been available for 200 years. Many national governments represent the outcome of centuries of development, arrangements arrived at with great pain. What history do we share with the Chinese, the Afghans, or even the Mexicans? Ignorance of the fact that a willingness to be governed grows over time, and only with considerable difficulty, appears to be no disqualification for a high diplomatic position in our country.

Another problem is that, in human affairs, big is invariably stupid. When decisionmakers are distant from the information on which their decisions should be based and shielded from the costs of their mistakes, the quality of their decisions inevitably declines. As our federal government has proved over the last few decades, bureaucracy becomes rigid and more concerned with the political fashion of the day than with the well-being of society. Imagine a structure ruling ten billion people that was based in Brussels and made decisions on speed limits in Swaziland.

Since I work at a large university, I am painfully familiar with the stupidity of intelligent and even creative people when they are gathered into large groups. During one intensely boring and feckless committee meeting, I took to passing notes to another scientist. In one, I drew the curve I thought described the torture being inflicted on us. With stupidity as the dependent variable, and the x axis the number of people involved in the decision, my curve dipped (stupidity diminishing) as the number moved from one to two, then rose again exponentially: Three people may be as intelligent as one, but it's galloping dementia from that point on. In the note she passed back to me, my friend responded that the dependent variable in her own work was quality of the conversation: Her graph was a steeply declining curve from two, the highest point. If we rude mechanicals can see this, why can't our betters?

With world government, we would have one of the disadvantages of a monopoly: the complacency that comes from a lack of competition. Even within government, people sometimes learn from the example of their superiors, and they may raise the level of their performance when the competition pulls ahead. One reason the Soviet Union collapsed is that its rulers could see that their system was inferior to that just across their borders.

Perhaps the worst disadvantage of world government is that, should the central authority turn to evil, there would be no escape: no England riding out the reign of Napoleon; no Switzerland to take in refugees. If we consider the history of national governments, we cannot be confident that a world government would not finally fall into the hands of evil leaders. Quite the contrary: A descent into tyranny would be inevitable.

Another argument against world government seems to me both utterly persuasive and a little disreputable, based as it is on guilt by association and *ad hominem* attacks. The people who lead the charge toward world government discredit it by their very support. If the Talbotts, Clintons, Blairs, and Albrights of the world all want something, then surely it's a bad idea. They disdain history and are confident that the appearance of beings as glorious as themselves signals the dropping of that dead weight. This is what makes them so dangerous, for they are deaf to the statesman's greatest teacher. They have outbid the legendary American military officer who said, during our war in Vietnam, that we had to destroy the village in order to save it. Our leaders have destroyed entire provinces and nations in the name of the greater good.

Millennial visions are all too frequently accompanied by a willingness to sacrifice those who get in the way. Mao, Hitler, Pol Pot, Lenin, Stalin: Those who demand we enter their wonderful new world and redeem all of history are the champion murderers of the human race. We common folk should beware those who claim ownership of a map to Utopia; the cobblestones paving the road to their destination are the skulls of those who got in their way.

Brian Kirkpatrick is a physician who lives in Baltimore, Maryland.

EDUCATION

School Days

by B.K. Eakman

No one could see where the floor began and the rubbish ended.

A window down the hall shattered,

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and I could hear the tinkle and clatter as the last broken pieces hit the ones that had preceded them.

May 21, 1981, was already hot in the Clear Lake suburb of Houston, Texas, an astronaut/engineer-dominated middle-class community adjacent to NASA's Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center. The main highway into Clear Lake, NASA Road-1, boasted a Texas-sized billboard that proclaimed: "CLEAR LAKE: A GREAT PLACE FOR A KID TO GROW UP."

The double doors were ajar outside the Clear Creek High classroom where I had taught for two years. A dusty wind funneled down the hallway, rustling layers of torn notebooks, crumpled papers, pop bottles, bars of soap, and tattered clothing. Lockers, colorful and spotless at the beginning of the school year, now gawked from lopsided hinges, their doors covered with obscenities. The bathrooms trickled water under silent doorways.

The school bell squalled like a spoiled brat, and the empty ritual known as "final examinations" began. For it was also Exemption Day—the last day of school, when "qualifying" pupils were free, or not, to take their final exams. The policy, set out in a handbook nobody read, stated that only students who had been absent fewer than three times during the term and who were not failing any subject were exempt from the last day's exams.

It was one o'clock, 55 minutes to Zero Hour, sandy beaches, and summer fun. A dozen or so students made their way through the nine months of learning that lay on the floor—the "kickers" (drugstore cowboys) in their Western boots, low-riding jeans and exaggerated Texas hats; the "freaks" (or drug set) decked out in hole-filled T-shirts, dirty-billed caps worn backward, and stringy long hair; and the "jocks" with their open-to-the-navel shirts and gold chains.

The loudspeaker kept droning its emergency message: "Principal to 'B' Building! Principal to 'B' Building, PLEASE!" At last the words became garbled, and the intercom crackled and died.

Graduation had taken place over a week before, and grades—at least unofficially—were tallied. Exams were a farce, and more than a few students knew it. And so the Army of the Exempt, like locusts, had come, done their damage, and gone.

I counted my pupils. Six. Three straight-A Vietnamese refugees who had come to the school in the middle of the year speaking practically no English, another straight-A student who had transferred to Clear Creek High at midterm from a school in England, a youngster who had spent three weeks in the hospital, and a disabled Hispanic girl who was barely passing and had come today to make sure she did.

I took a deep breath, forced a smile, shut the door to my classroom, and began explaining the examination to the six stalwart students who had trekked through the muck to get here.

When they had settled down to work, I buried myself in the papers on my desk. A note on the bottom of one caught my eye—a word of thanks conveying best wishes for a fun-filled summer and expressing the hope that I would be the student's teacher next year.

I felt my eyes sting. I knew I wouldn't be back.

Unable to concentrate on paperwork, I opened the drawer containing my little stack of treasures—among them essays written by my rhetoric students in their enthusiasm for a class I had piloted, but which the administration later canceled with the excuse that "teachers can no longer be spared for challenging pursuits when so many remedial readers need our help."

I sighed. Everything would have to be packed or tossed.

Suddenly my eyes fixed on a familiar binding. The title was *Annual of the Maret School, 1959, Washington, D.C.*

My old school yearbook. I must have forgotten to take it home. I had shown it to a few curious pupils who wanted to see "what Mrs. Eakman looked like when she was little." I opened the cover and smiled, recalling how my students had hooted when they saw the white bobby socks, oxfords, sport coats and bow ties.

I flipped to my seventh-grade class picture. *I used to hate this picture*, I mused. I quickly found another page—a class shot of the first-graders: A Laotian boy sat next to a prim little Arab girl, Khalida, one of the Arab ambassador's seven "little stepping stones," as we'd called them, because he had one in nearly every grade. Khalida's hand, like all the other little hands in the room, rested on a sea of open texts and notebooks. But her expression stole the show—huge alert eyes, head cocked to one side.

No one in school that year had spoken Arabic, so the teachers rounded up their best readers to tutor the newcomers. I had been one of them. We all worked in shifts during recess. At the end of a few short weeks, we were amazed to find our charges babbling away in English and French along with the rest of us.

How had Maret managed, I wondered, without bilingual funding, multicultural programs, and federal grants?

Behind Khalida sat a young man from India—with a name I could no longer pronounce—and in front was the French boy, Luc. All the boys wore coats and ties; all the girls, simple dresses or skirts and blouses. It never had occurred to Maret administrators to establish a dress code. Our parents had sent us to school as though every day were important.

On the next page was a shot of the student body at the annual Christmas pageant—a major event at Maret, always held in a church rented for the occasion. There we all were, looking cherubic, in our white choir robes with those enormous black bows under our chins. To my knowledge, no one ever opted out on religious grounds—or wanted to. We sang about the Christ Child, the Virgin Mary, the Christmas season, in English, in French, *a capella*, descant, and harmony—feats made all the more remarkable because here we were, an international school of Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Catholics, Protestants, and heaven knows what else.

What made it different back then? Christmas was seen as part of the American culture, and respect for religion was a "given," in any case. To the parents I knew as a child, whatever their native land, religious institutions represented Standards, the kind with a capital S, and Principles, the sort you built your life around. That the creeds and doctrines of our various faiths may have differed was not part of that equation. Children needed Standards, and that was that.

Maret had started out in the early 1920's as an all-girls international school, founded by three sisters who had immigrated to the United States from France around 1910. Despite early deprivations, they had been blessed with a fine Swiss education, an experience they never forgot. The Maret sisters distinguished themselves in various careers, pulling themselves up by their bootstraps. Their dreams crystallized in the form of tiny Maret School, which flourished and eventually was moved to the Woodley Estate in Washington, D.C., the summer home of four presidents, where it remains to this day.

The year I turned 12, 1959, happened also to be the year Maret received its first

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influx of transfers from public schools. Nearly all were promptly placed one to three grade levels back, and many teachers soon questioned the wisdom of having accepted so many at once. Although nearly all were white and middle-to-upper class, there was a decided difference in their academic backgrounds and conduct.

The new transfers and their parents continually pushed for mixed, school-sponsored dances for pre-teenagers and early teens. Most of us old-timers weren't particularly interested, until we heard we ought to be from the newcomers. The public-school girls came to class in skirts so tight they could barely walk—"hobble skirts," we called them. Their parents not only permitted, but encouraged, unchaperoned parties, where games such as spin-the-bottle and dark rooms were considered "cute." The newcomers passed around their red lipsticks in the girls' bathroom and taunted us less-sophisticated old-timers.

While menstruation and brassieres had never exactly been taboo topics, they took on an obsessive quality in 1959 that hadn't existed at Maret before. The new students did not talk about sex in terms of love and romance, the way Maret girls had. Instead, they referred to sex by the "f" word, which to us connoted something entirely different, and certainly did not induce passion. Indeed, I remembered being punished by a teacher for saying "shut up" to a classmate; the "f" and "s" words would have been unthinkable.

Peer pressure, off-color language, and sexual preoccupation, of course, were not new to America's public schools, but they were to Maret, and both our teachers and parents let us know they were not impressed.

Like most Maret old-timers, I was simultaneously thrilled and baffled by the newcomers. We practically fawned over them because they were different, because we had seen the same faces for so many years, and because we'd been taught to—well, make "guests" feel at home. At public schools, I later discovered, all new kids were fair game for ostracism and ridicule.

Pundits today wring their hands over the rash of school violence, the shootings in Littleton, Paducah, Springfield, and Atlanta. But I noticed long ago the thread that runs through extreme demonstrations of hate by seemingly normal children: peer rejection. When did it start turning sadistic? In looking over that old school yearbook, it suddenly occurred to me that those pivotal years in the 1950's, when early dating was legitimized and normalized through school-sponsored dances for barely pubescent adolescents, wreaked more havoc on tender egos than all the admonishments doled out by strict teachers and protective parents.

Today, the popular term for ending a youthful relationship is "dumping." One party unceremoniously ignores the former object of his or her affections, without explanation. At a time when children are still forming concepts about compassion, "dumping" is devastating, akin to the death or disappearance of a family member. Few children of 10 to 15 are emotionally capable of handling that level of rejection. Pervasive anger and self-hate are among the more long-term destructive responses. Before the 1950's, parents in Europe, Latin America, and the United States must have sensed somehow that it wasn't healthy for young children to spend long periods of time together, left to their own devices. The tendency toward cliques was discouraged, and children spent more time with their parents than with each other. After-school activities, when there were any, were taken up with individual learning experiences, not team sports—ballet, horseback riding, music, or merely working in the family store.

Parents of the 1950's came of age in an era when adults actually enjoyed the company of young children, a time when stores didn't place signs in their windows admonishing parents to supervise their offspring or, worse, barring children altogether. Maître d's didn't recoil in horror at the sight of parents with youngsters in tow, and people didn't put away their better knickknacks just because children were accompanying their parents to dinner. In my parents' day, children were made to feel a part of adult life instead of being shuttled off to their own activities. This was both unconscious and deliberate. Our parents and teachers wanted us to be comfortable with civilized behavior, but they also were guarding against our tormenting one another.

At Maret, one teacher stood out from the others—Mlle. Anne Marie Picard. Mlle. Picard seemed to us stern, intimidating, and unapproachable. She always meant business. We actually called her just "Mam'selle"—no other designation was necessary. Everyone knew whom you meant. I used to fix my attention on what I supposed to be a wart beside her nose as I was being lectured for my manifold sins and wickedness. I have since learned that it takes roughly 25 years to turn a wart into a beauty mark.

My most vivid memory of Mam'selle was her standing in front of the class, scolding us in her thick, accented English, her profuse gray curls bobbing: "Someday you weel t'ank me for dees," she would reiterate, wagging a chastising finger. "You *weel* come back to *dees* school when you are old and you *weel* say, '*Merci, mademoiselle, merci,*' just like all dee ones before *you*." It was her favorite speech.

All the kids knew what Mam'selle stood for and what to expect from her, no matter what else we may have thought about her at the time. Oddly, there was a comfort in that—even while she was fishing the crusts of our sandwich out of the garbage can and handing them back to us in the cafeteria, admonishing us not to waste food, and confiscating the purses we had gotten for Christmas, because we were "spending too much time showing off." Mam'selle stood for Standards. She didn't humor us or try to be our pal. She couldn't be conned, and there was no appeal from her pronouncements.

At Maret, there was no place for phony praise of the ego-boosting kind. It was only after I started teaching in the late 1960's that I heard patronizing comments such as, "Pretty good for no practice." In Mam'selle's view, you might become "pretty good" *if* you practiced . . . and, then again, you might not. When you were not good at something, you continued to practice. Then you would appreciate those who excelled. That was how we learned to discern a polished performance from one that was merely technically correct, how we came to tell the difference between an exceptional piece of music and less sophisticated pieces, how we eventually recognized an authentic Parisian, and how we distinguished between a Monet and a Renoir. Today, such cultural knowledge has been abandoned. Youngsters scribble graffiti on the walls, and we tell them they are wonderful artists.

Our parents never had to wonder what was going on in our heads or at school. Like my mother, who held a full-time job, many parents avoided the school bus and ferried their own children to and from school, even if it meant using public transportation. Unlike our public-school counterparts, who began their days virtually without supervision, jock-

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eying all day for popularity points beginning on the school bus, most Maret youngsters came to school hand in hand with Mother or via the family car with Father. By the middle-school years, we congregated every morning under the school portico to see who was coming next up the driveway. Although our parents probably didn't think about it, this exercise gave our elders an unembellished view of the children with whom their offspring would be spending the day. The frequent opportunity to observe, however unconsciously, the student body when everyone was off-guard actually enabled parents to relate more fully to the lives of their youngsters and to make wiser decisions on their behalf.

Of course, the down side, at least for me at the time, was that every day at five o'clock (school ran from 9:00 A.M. until 4:30 P.M.) my mother got an unsolicited report on my behavior. Had I thrown my sandwich in the cafeteria trash can again? Failed to turn in my homework? Excused myself from study hall to giggle in the bathroom with my best friend? Worn lipstick to class? Well, it would all come out at 5:00 P.M.

Yet, such frequent communication between our parents and our teachers kept us youngsters from becoming morbidly peer-oriented, to the point of being uncomfortable around adults. The so-called generation gap didn't sprout full-blown with the emergence of Bob Dylan, the Beatles, or Betty Friedan. It emerged gradually—on the school bus; in increasingly large, noisy, and impersonal classrooms; and in the school gym, where ten-year-olds were told to select their teammates for dodgeball instead of being directed to a team by the gym teacher. It was too much socialization, not too little, that eventually produced today's *Lord of the Flies* kiddie subculture, leaving young people in a semi-permanent state of adolescence.

The move toward a "child-centered curriculum," which I'd studied in college as a prospective educator, had come full-circle by the 1980's. Teachers dressed like their students and used teenage expressions in the classroom—which, predictably, failed to impress the kids. Textbooks had shifted away from classical themes—adult themes without the "X"-rating—to concentrate on the problems of adolescence. This meant that the social issues explored in works such as *Jane Eyre*, *David Copperfield*, and *Oliver Twist* were replaced with supposedly relevant fare about drug abuse, teen pregnancy, and racial prejudice. On one level, some of it might have been appropriate. But the extreme to which it was carried shut out anything that had lasting value, a moral, or a memorable line, such as "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times." The newer literature, replete with vulgarisms, was hard to hold up as a model of prose. Most of it contained depressing and pointless trivia. Some stories were downright inappropriate for the classroom—like the one about a father who deliberately set his son on fire, and the short piece about a troubled youth who strangles a helpless animal. Even my students chorused, "Ugh!"

Gradually, social adjustment took the place of academics, and "coping skills" became the new focus of learning. The scheme seemed to be self-perpetuating. The less time educators devoted to fundamental skills and substantive learning, the more students looked around for challenges to fill the void. These included drugs, promiscuity, and vandalism. The situation could be remedied, of course, only by spending more time on social adjustment.

It seemed that each new crop of youngsters I saw was less able—and less disposed—than the last to read first-rate literature, even as an in-class project. They absorbed little or nothing about their cultural roots. The only allusions most high-schoolers recognized related to the bathroom, drugs, sex, or mental illness. By 1981, I noticed a new kind of segregation emerging in America: adults *versus* kids. Neither seemed to want the other around. Remembering the Maret School in the 50's, I saw this as an enormous departure from earlier eras. Societal changes of that magnitude just didn't occur naturally in a 25-year time frame.

I now realize that the mademoiselles and monsieurs at Maret in the 50's had found the key to unlock the mystery of a child's thinking processes, while in recent times clinical-minded Ph.D's have somehow lost it. Even though my mademoiselles' standards had been impossibly high, their objectives ("outcomes," in modern parlance) had been limited and specific. They didn't try to teach us everything from sewing a blouse to driving a car. They didn't pry into our family affairs and try to settle the disputes. They didn't attempt to alter our religious beliefs. They didn't examine our budding sexual feelings.

What our teachers did give us were boundaries and benchmarks. They gave us "tough love." They honed, chiseled, reminded, scolded, and smoothed out the rough edges. They were visible and consistent. They taught us what to expect from society and provided the guidelines that would stay with us the rest of our lives.

In 1983, I returned to Washington, D.C., with my husband after a 20-year absence. One of my first stops was my alma mater. I knew from old friends that the mademoiselles, mesdames, and monsieurs we knew were gone, along with the international flavor of the school. Like its counterparts nationwide, the price tag had become astronomical as the demand for what such schools offered continued to outstrip the supply. For all these reasons, I didn't expect my return to be such a sentimental journey.

Ironically, my visit fell on May 21, exactly three years to the day after I left Clear Creek High School and the teaching profession forever. After touring the Maret campus on Cathedral Avenue, I hailed a taxi to "T" Street, where I found myself knocking nervously at the door of a garden-wreathed brick home with planter boxes in the windows. I nervously rehearsed what I was going to say, wondered whether I would sound "polished," and worried that perhaps I wouldn't be welcome, considering all the trouble I'd been.

But when I saw the now-white curls atop her head, the familiar beauty mark and half-smile, the library shelves covered with Mother's Day cards from all the children she'd never had—dozens of old students like me—I forgot my chagrin, threw my arms around her, and croaked, "*Merci, Mam'selle. Merci beaucoup.*"

B.K. Eakman is executive director of the National Education Consortium and the author of Cloning of the American Mind: Eradicating Morality Through Education *(Huntington House).*

Can American Legal Education Be Fixed?

by Stephen B. Presser

Something has gone radically awry with legal education and maybe even legal practice. For about a decade now, the loudest wailing over the state of

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affairs has come from Chief Judge Harry Edwards of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, who wrote a landmark article in the *Michigan Law Review* in 1992. As law schools have become obsessed with impractical theories and law firms with maximizing revenues, Judge Edwards argued, both have quit paying attention to the ethical practice of the law. Judge Edwards got it just about right. Rarely do today's law students get an appreciation of the 18th- and 19th-century Anglo-American ideal of the lawyer-statesman—the community leader devoted to the law and its preservation and dedicated to using it to help conserve traditional values.

Today's lawyers commonly regard the law as an infinitely malleable set of theories and doctrines which can be manipulated by judges at the prompting of clever advocates. With the triumph of legal realism at Yale and Columbia in the 1930's and 40's, law professors came to believe that there are no overarching ethical (or other) principles in the law. This led to a wholesale attack on the doctrines of constitutional law to permit, first, an extraordinary redistribution of wealth and political power under the New Deal and, eventually, the wholesale rewriting of the Constitution by the Warren and Burger Courts. By the late 20th century, such Yale law professors as Bruce Ackerman and Akhil Amar could explain with straight faces that we needn't bother amending the Constitution—a "living Constitution" could be altered simply by judges recognizing the articulated desires of the people, which turn out to be the articulated desires of the Yale law professors.

During the impeachment of Bill Clinton, the Yale-Law-School-trained President's defense—turning on his implicit acknowledgment that his guilt depended on what the meaning of the word "is" is—made it clear to almost everyone that American lawyering is no longer what it once was. Curiously, virtually no leader of the bench or bar condemned the President's betrayal of the rule of law, and only a very few law professors and a slim majority in the House of Representatives seemed to sense that they were fighting for a legal ideal all but abandoned everywhere else.

The notion that the law is anything you want it to be has created a legal educational system that can only be described as anarchic. With no solid foundation left to stand on, law faculties in the 1960's and 70's abandoned their required curricula for the second and third years of legal education. After the first year—which covers the ancient common-law topics of property, contracts, torts, criminal law, and civil procedure—law students now pick and choose from a Chinese menu of options, most either exhibiting colorful theories or reflecting trendy new areas of academic and political concern. Sadly, most law-school courses after the first year do little to instill professional pride or even train students in their craft. Many students find themselves grossly unprepared for their bar exams, much less the practice of law itself.

Students must now spend several months and large amounts of money on bar-review courses and then undergo one or two years of acculturation in law firms before they are of much use to anyone. For too many, even when they learn their way around law offices, the practice of law has been drained of any joy or fulfillment other than what comes from reading their immense paychecks; their duties consist of putting in 60- to 80-hour weeks helping clients wage interminable battles against the clients of other law firms. Legal realism has resulted in great uncertainty in the law: Wide areas have been opened up to regulation by the federal government, and there is massive doubt over whether new federal rules or old state law governs. There is more than enough to keep platoons of lawyers busy simply crafting agreements which seek to insulate clients from legal liability.

For all these reasons, the practice of law has become more like working in some leather-upholstered, brightly lit, high-ceilinged factory and less like the calling it once was. It is often said that associates in the best law firms are cannon fodder; most hold their first jobs only for one or two years before they shuttle off to firms less prestigious but, perhaps, more humane. In the great law firms, which have roughly quadrupled in size since the 1960's (500 lawyers in a big-city firm is not uncommon), very few associates are able to wait out the eight or nine years it takes to become partners, and those who do are often uncertain why they've done so. Of course, stunning salaries and partnership draws enable them to live in almost undreamed-of splendor, but until they reach senior partnership, they have little free time to savor those luxuries.

There are still some happy and dedicated lawyers, but a majority of the profession understands that something important has been lost. Within the legal academy, there is a widespread acknowledgment that something has gone wrong, but very little agreement over what that is and whether it can be repaired. Two generations ago, these problems didn't seem to exist; but two generations ago, it was not uncommon to hear even the Supreme Court declare that the United States was a Christian nation and that Christianity was a part of our law. Thomas Jefferson believed that to be in error, and he wrote a nasty little screed claiming that Christianity could not have been a part of the common law because the institutions of the common law began when England was still pagan. Jefferson had a point, of course, and there is also something to Benjamin Disraeli's remark to an Anglican colleague that, when his ancestors were writing the Bible, the Anglican's were living in trees and painting their faces blue. Nevertheless, Jefferson's views were out of the mainstream in American law when he uttered them, and the idea that the law was concordant with Christianity was held by William Blackstone, Joseph Story, James Kent, and even Alexander Hamilton. The body of Christian moral doctrines gave context and shape to not only legal education and the content of the law itself, but to the ethical aspects of practice.

With the national revulsion at the treatment of the Jews at the hands of the Nazis during the 1930's and 40's, however, the idea of any one religion or creed playing a predominant role in American public life and American law lost ground. For a whole complex of reasons, the WASP legal establishment which had exerted influence and formed the culture for a century and a half seemed to evaporate almost overnight, and legal realism became the dominant ideology. The proponents of legal realism allied with progressivism, claiming that the new doctrine was much more democratic than the essentially aristocratic beliefs it had replaced. With the influence of legal-realist professors on the justices of the Warren Court, judges were emboldened, first to protect racial minorities by rewriting police procedures and election practices, and then to "protect" religious minorities by forbidding any school prayer or even compulsory reading from the Bible. By the 1990's, the Supreme Court had declared it unconstitutional for school authorities to arrange for nonsectarian

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prayers at high-school graduations, and the divorce of law and the public sphere from religion was nearly complete.

With the passage of the civil-rights laws in the mid-60's and the anti-authority animus spawned by the Vietnam War and Watergate, any legal philosophy that stressed hierarchies and timeless truths (as America's Christian legal heritage did) seemed doomed. In recent years, the moral failures of American society (which led to events as diverse as the sullying of the Oval Office by President Clinton and the tragedies at Columbine High School) have been encouraged by the attitudes of American law professors, lawyers, and judges. Worse still, the utter indifference to the rule of law that President Clinton showed at home was replicated in his administration's and NATO's policies in Yugoslavia, where inconvenient requirements of the U.N. Charter and the pronouncements of the U.N. Security Council were simply ignored as we made war—without the benefit of an express congressional declaration—on a sovereign country which had never attacked us.

In response to Judge Edwards' 1992 jeremiad, a dismally few legal educators offered the prospect of a return to the "good old days" of the 19th century, when ethics, morals, and even Christianity were a part of legal education. Judge Edwards, who is black, demurred on the grounds that, in the "good old days," he would never have been able to practice law, much less make it to the bench. His alternative is to encourage more clinical legal education and less theory, so that law schools would begin to prepare students better for practice. He also seems dazzled by the efforts of New York University Law School, where he is an adjunct professor, to prepare its students for practice not only in the United States but around the world. N.Y.U. has billed itself as the first "global" law school (which has led some unimpressed legal academics to tweak its dean by suggesting that he had created the first "intergalactic" law school).

I think that American legal education should pay more attention to the practice of law in Europe and Asia; at Northwestern, we are attempting to build a "global" law school without any risk, I think, of turning the classrooms into the bar scene from the first *Star Wars* movie. Even so, I think there is something missing from N.Y.U.'s approach; the globalization of legal education is not likely to supply the ethical dimension that Judge Edwards wants and that the law sorely needs.

Like many other fancy American law schools, N.Y.U. claims that it is trying to promote justice as well as law, but for most current legal academics, "justice" means the redistribution of goods instead of the Aristotelian, Platonic, or Christian concept of ordering society according to a divine plan. The emptiness of the "redistribution" model has led to something of a resurgence in religiously based law schools committed to producing Christian lawyers. Thus, Pat Robertson has founded Regent Law School in Virginia; Pepperdine Law School in California has flourished (almost bagging no less than Ken Starr for its dean); and a recent start-up, Ave Maria Law School in Ann Arbor, will offer a solidly Catholic legal education.

You don't have to be Christian to be ethical, although the Framers believed (and I think they were right) that the law requires a foundation in morality, and morality requires a foundation in religion. Most of them—Jefferson is the notable exception—believed that Christianity was essential to that foundation, and even Jefferson, while eschewing Christian doctrine, embraced Christian morality. If legal education in this country is to be saved, it must return to its philosophical roots, which are deeply planted in Judeo-Christian notions and the aristocratic responsibilities commented on so favorably by Alexis de Tocqueville. Judge Edwards may not want the clock turned back because he remembers old injustices, but, as C.S. Lewis reminded us, we ought to turn the clock back if it's showing the wrong time.

My solution for reforming legal education is to return to a required curriculum with a heavy dose of the history of American law. The connection between law and morality, it seems to me, is necessary and inescapable. Equally important, American constitutional history casts grave doubt upon such 20th-century legal-realist notions as a "living Constitution" or the recent infinite expansion of the 14th Amendment to prohibit the states from doing what they were meant to do. Legal realism's greatest triumph—the use of the Bill of Rights as a club to beat back state and local governments—would be exposed as judicial usurpation, and perhaps the next generation of lawyers might then be inclined to return the Bill of Rights to its original understanding as a limitation on the federal Leviathan.

Parts of the current first-year curriculum of common-law subjects still merit their places of honor, particularly if they are taught with attention to their origins. We could dispense with much of the potpourri that clutters up the second and third years. Instead, those years could be combined with legal internships, so that much of the student's education would be supplied by practitioners themselves.

Currently, an oddity within the legal academy is that fewer and fewer tenure-track teachers have much experience in practice. At Northwestern and other schools, we have begun to recognize that adjuncts who practice can often do a better job of training than can tenure-track faculty, and we are in the process of reordering our curriculum accordingly. The movement toward more ethical approaches to the study of management in the nation's business schools offers an opportunity to combine moral approaches to the law with moral approaches to business. There is a turn at the University of Michigan and Northwestern, for example, toward understanding that, since most managers must deal with law and regulation, they also need some legal training—if only to discern when they do or do not need to bring in the lawyers. I now spend more time in the classroom at Northwestern's Kellogg Graduate School of Management than I do at the law school, and I suspect economies of scale and convergence of concerns will, in the next century, lead some universities to combine law schools and management schools into single entities.

Reforming law schools is not an easy undertaking, however, because of the unwillingness both of individual professors to alter what they teach and of accrediting associations to permit change from the standard three-year period of student purgatory. Before long, though, some brave institutions will likely experiment with a different three-year pattern—perhaps a year to learn the fundamentals (the liberal-arts aspects of the profession of law); another year of supervised internships, clinical practice, and upper-level courses while the student remains at the law school; and then two or three years in practice, followed by a return to the academy for at least a year of further specialized training or preparation for a teaching position or one on the bench. As legal education now stands in America, there is no particular training for law-school teachers or for

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judges (both of whom are haphazardly elevated from the mass of lawyers), and this may account for the chaotic nature of American judicial practice and legal education.

There are some internal pressures for change (Northwestern's law-school dean dragged us kicking and screaming into the production of a "strategic plan" to accomplish some of the goals I've listed here, and several other law schools are doing the same), but external factors are likely to determine whether the law schools will save themselves. Most law-school deans lament the annual *U.S. News and World Report* rankings which seek to establish a hierarchy of law schools, but flawed as these rankings are, they may be the best means we have for rewarding positive efforts for change. The recent rise in the rankings of some schools (N.Y.U. and Duke, for instance) seem to reflect their attempts to address at least some of the current shortcomings of legal education.

We Americans have no monarchy, hereditary aristocracy, or established church. Since the beginning, just about all that has held us together (and that tenuously, as the Civil War showed) was a national commitment to the Constitution, the rule of law, and the morality and religion that undergirded them. As the rule of law has eroded in recent years and the Constitution has been pummeled, it is no wonder that we have trembled on the edge of urban unrest, plunged into the crass excesses of materialism, and completely lost our moral bearings. Men trained in the law and its history were indispensable to the writing of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. None of them were trained in law schools, of course, since the American law school didn't exist until the middle of the 19th century. But unless the American law school can reinvent itself, drawing from the classical moral and religious traditions of the 18th and 19th centuries and recapturing the benefits of professional apprenticeship as a means of legal education, it may not last another century—and it will have few mourners.

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CULTURE

Kulturklatsch of the Wholly Global Empire

by Marian Kester Coombs

"All politics is local": once a savvy saying, now a wistful whine. All culture, too, used to be local, but that's changing fast. The rule of thumb for distinguishing between vestiges of the merely local and harbingers of the emerging global is simple: efficiency.

You can fit many more units of global into your life because each unit requires you to do far less. Global is 24-7 with no capricious "day of rest." Local culture coats your tongue, colors your speech, flavors your mind, gets all over your clothes and under your fingernails, makes you a veritable zombie in its service, while global culture is clean and modular: Simple, interchangeable units plug easily into and out of the desired modemality. Local means being stuck in character all your life; global means never having any character at all.

Global permits you to be a tourist in life, just driving through, as opposed to being "on the ground," rolling around in the dirt with the rest of the planet's lower fauna; it allows you to pick and choose among the nice parts (cuisine, amusing dances, bizarre costumes, touching legends), while leaving the nasty parts (nationalism, chauvinism, sexism, religion, military service) alone. Would you rather be very good at just one culture, or appreciate many? Would you rather be "just yourself," or all things to all people? Global regards local much as the Dustin Hoffman character in *Wag the Dog* regards the masses whom his artfully crafted sentimentality has moved to tears. ("Real tears," he murmurs. "It's my greatest production ever!") In other words, local culture is a spectacle, but not one you'd want to take seriously enough to be trapped inside forever.

The globally cultured realize that, all things being equal, nothing in particular is worth a damn. There's always someone or something bigger, better, smarter, faster, cooler, hipper, weirder, or just different somewhere else or other, so why bother? Everything suffers by global comparison. If you've seen them all, you've seen that one—been there, done that. Why stop at anything? Instead of wasting your life painstakingly mastering a particular culture in order to recreate and reproduce it, wouldn't you rather subscribe to Humanity's Greatest Hits and have them all at your fingertips? Why learn and transmit a culture when you can simply access one as needed? And why spend time and energy creating when you can consume with a fraction of the effort?

The entire process of evolution itself has been advanced—or, perhaps, miraculously reversed—by modern methods. The primitive form of evolution led to greater complexity, difficulty, differentiation, separation, incompatibility, and unpredictability. The progressive form reunites, standardizes, equalizes, and radically simplifies. This has already led to a new (but quite temporary) global division of labor. For instance, the best (and cheapest) baseball players come from the Dominican Republic. The best comedians come from Canada, the best motelkeepers from India, the best taxi drivers from Kashmir, the best Defense Intelligence Agency and National Security Council employees from mainland China, and so on. Instead of trying to compete for all these professions within a single historically distinct geographic entity ("nation"), let each region specialize in its own area of expertise until such time as progressive evolution has at last abolished all distinctions and all jobs are One.

The following guide highlights the local *versus* global distinction (senseless busywork *versus* efficiency):

Local: Listen to the particular melodies of the wind as it blows through your native forests and mountain passes; carve woodwind instruments from selected branches; reproduce these melodies; move slowly to the music in intricate dance patterns so deeply a part of you they are almost unconscious. Later, develop the dance music of your people into symphonies, symphonic poems, variations, mazurkas, polonaises, barcaroles, tarantellas, rondos, minuets, ballads.

Global: Press another selection on your CD player.

Local: Cultivate certain vines and breed them into bearers of the perfect grape; wreathe hillsides with carefully

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trained and tended plants; pick the grapes at just the right moment; crush them, steep them, rinse them, ferment them, mix them, age them; decant the wine at just the right moment, for a distilled draught of sunlight from a long-lost vineyard.

Global: Drink a can of Coke.

Local: Spend hours in passionate argument at a cafe, sipping the regional aperitif or cordial or wine or beer or downing small cups of strong coffee, you and your friends constituting a long-standing, self-established debating club, informal court, floating chess game, and drinking society.

Global: Watch CNN while drinking a can of Coke.

Local: Proudly prefer your own people; know its history intimately; defend it as if it were your extended family (which it is); revel in the unrivaled beauty of its characteristic complexion, hair texture, eye color, nose and head shape, its famed musicality, its sense of humor, its melancholy verse; loudly discuss among friends its many faults and shortcomings, but disdain hearing these pointed out by outsiders; bask in the "narcissism of small differences," those quirks and oddities and endearing strangenesses that mark your people as truly itself and none other; extol its precious and unique accomplishments; worry about its vibrancy and potency in a hostile world, since you know that whatever is not growing is probably dying, and that a people without a territory is just another extinct race in the making.

Global: Watch CNN; recognize that all other peoples are much superior to your own, except perhaps for the one that's been earmarked for this month's Group Hate.

Local: Memorize hours' worth of poetry, stories, and legends and many verses of songs for every occasion; sing or recite in company when the spirit moves you.

Global: Download and watch a movie online.

Local: Compose a stew that simmers on the stove all day, combining fat from your ducks and lard from your pigs, dried local beans, a bouquet of garden herbs and vegetables, wine and whatever lamb, sausage, or chicken you have on hand; know how to tell if an egg is good or a nut is ripe, how to dress a goose and remove its liver, how to make a watertight basket out of woven dried grass, how to gather and use herbs and essential oils to lessen fever and heal wounds, how to read the signs on earth and in the heavens for sowing and harvest, drought and blizzard.

Global: Order Thai takeout.

Local: Hew logs into planks; cure and bow the wood into ribs, a hull, hatches; build your craft without computer calculations or simulations; rig it to be seaworthy; navigate by compass, sextant, or dead reckoning; endure months of hard physical exertion, uncertainty, exposure, bad food, hostile encounters, and rough seas; land in uncharted coves and explore unknown landscapes; contact and learn to communicate with strange peoples; draw beautiful maps by hand; make your way home to tell the story.

Global: Adjust the headrest on your airplane seat.

Local: Meditate upon transcendent, paradoxical ideas; withdraw from society in order to devote yourself to purity and illumination; rise daily before dawn to sing matins; fast, pray, labor, look inward; selflessly engage in good works; walk barefoot for hundreds of miles to worship at a shrine.

Global: Watch *Touched by an Angel*.

Marian Kester Coombs writes from Crofton, Maryland.

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In The Dark

by George McCartney

Details, Details

Like God and the Devil, films reveal themselves in the details. Pluck a scene at random, examine it closely, and you'll be able to forecast the rest of the movie's merit with remarkable accuracy.

Take director Lars von Trier's *Dancer in the Dark*. It tells the tale of Selma (Bjork, the Icelandic singing star) who is suffering from an eye disease that will leave her blind. She has emigrated from Czechoslovakia to a small town in Washington at the end of the 1950's, hoping to retain the services of a local ophthalmological specialist for her 11-year-old son, who has inherited her affliction. She's sure he can be saved from her fate by a timely operation. (Why this procedure should work for him but not her is left wholly unexplained, as is the nature of the disease itself.) To pay for the operation, she takes a job in a nearby factory, where she operates a metal-stamping machine. Von Trier makes this seem a terrifying mechanism through repeated close-ups of its piston-driven pressing block slamming down onto the tin plates Selma must place beneath it. Not able to see the machine as more than a blur, she operates it by touch. Again and again, the block narrowly misses her pink little hands as she tries to keep up with its ever-quickening pace. Drama enough? Not at all. Von Trier wants something even more harrowing. When her landlord makes noises about raising her rent, Selma decides to work the night shift, too, only to discover that, as an after-hour worker, she's expected to run two pressing machines at far more rapid rates than during the day. This is just one in a chain of plot turns that make this film about as aesthetically honest as, say, *The Little Match Girl*. Yet it won the Palme d'Or at Cannes last year, and many American critics have fallen into line, hailing it as a triumph of innovative, hard-edged filmmaking. How can this be? It's a matter of style and substance.

Despite the surpassing childishness of his story, von Trier cultivates a style guaranteed to win reverential approval from a certain kind of fashionable reviewer. In this film and others, notably the execrable *Breaking the Waves*, he deliberately forswears technical sophistication. As a member of the Danish Dogma school of cinema, he believes that serious, socially conscious films must eschew illusion and fakery. This means shooting with handheld cameras in natural light and confining action as much as possible to real time. The resulting *faux*-amateur production fairly shouts, "Look, ma, no trickery!" But without trickery, cinema wouldn't exist. Films necessarily begin with the illusion of motion achieved by running a strip of snapshots through a projector: That's why they're called "movies."

Von Trier's aesthetic puritanism is at once irritating and risible. He would have us believe his moviemaking is more honest than high-tech studio productions. Presumably, technical crudity guarantees dramatic authenticity. But this film's unprofessional look is completely fabricated. It's all too evident that von Trier has worked strenuously to keep his camera jiggling, his editing a hodgepodge of unmatched shots, and his focus optional. His compositions routinely lop off actors' heads and leave objects significant to the scene beyond the frame. Aspiring to absolute realism, von Trier has only succeeded in making a film that irritatingly never lets us forget we're watching a movie.

The substance of the film is even worse. In von Trier's mind, 1950's America is a place of soul-suffocating rigidity, virulent anticommunism, addictive consumerism, and a general hankering to execute the less fortunate. In some quarters, of course, this is considered unvarnished realism.

To make his indictment stick, von Trier recklessly piles one hilarious plot contrivance upon another. Besides her woes at the factory, Selma finds herself at the mercy of her crazed landlord, Bill (David Morse, a fine actor who is wasted here). A policeman, Bill is married to a woman who "spends and spends." He never says no, however, for fear of losing her. The evidence of her spending, by the way, is nowhere in sight; I can hardly imagine a couple living more plainly. But von Trier is convinced that Americans are capitalist-driven, compulsive consumers, and we simply have to accept his word on it.

To stave off the financially ruinous consequences of his wife's invisible extravagance, Bill does what any other cop would do: He chooses the most impoverished woman in his precinct, Selma, and steals from her. After all, what other option—legal or illegal—could this strapping, six-foot-plus cop have? When Selma discovers the theft, she confronts Bill and, despite her elfin proportions, manages to kill him in the ensuing tussle. During the trial that follows, the prosecutor seizes on her alien politics. "She said communism is better for human beings," he hisses to an alarmed jury. Despite von Trier's loudly avowed artlessness, he cleverly manages to punctuate these scenes with shots of a billowing American flag. How sardonic!

As the noose of Selma's fate tightens, she retreats ever more frequently into the world of her imagination, which is shaped by her love of musicals. As she explains, nothing can go wrong in a musical. This gives von Trier license to alternate between "real" scenes shot in a drab, sepia tone and Selma's brightly lit inner vision of a world transformed by music. She can sing and dance to the mechanical rhythms of hissing, clattering factory machines or board freight trains filled with ragged hoboes for a proletarian romp *à la* Bob Fosse. Shot in glowing, primary-color vibrancy, these sequences would be quite charming if they weren't

Dancer in the Dark

Produced by AV-Fund Norway, Arte France Cinéma, and the Danish Film Institute
Directed and written by Lars von Trier
Distributed by Fine Line Features

The Contender

Produced by Battleground Productions
Directed and written by Rod Lurie
Distributed by DreamWorks Distribution

Best in Show

Produced by Castle Rock Entertainment
Directed by Christopher Guest
Screenplay by Christopher Guest and Eugene Levy
Distributed by Warner Bros.

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infused with the same sickly sentimentality that pervades the rest of the film. During her bizarre dance number following Bill's death, Bjork sings a song featuring this touching refrain: "The time it takes for a tear to fall is all the time it takes to forgive me." I can't agree: This tendentious bathos is unforgivable.

Unlike *Dancer in the Dark*, Rod Lurie's *The Contender* has been beautifully filmed and smoothly edited. Its details, however, reveal an underlying moral ugliness. Watching it, I was reminded of Mary McCarthy's comment about Lillian Hellman's elegantly written memoir, *Pentimento*. Every word, McCarthy alleged, was a lie, including the "ands" and the "ors." The same could be said of every frame in this film.

Sen. Laine Hanson is the contender whom President Jackson Evans has chosen to replace his recently deceased vice president. (In these roles, Joan Allen mistakes primness for gravitas, while Jeff Bridges seems to think smarm is charm.) No sooner does Evans announce his choice than a compromising photo surfaces. A naked girl resembling the 19-year-old Hanson seems to be servicing several frat boys simultaneously. On principle, Hanson refuses to address the ensuing scandal: People's sexual lives, she argues, are private and therefore beyond public scrutiny. Only when a benighted congressman suggests the activity in the photo is deviant sex does the progressive senator permit herself to comment. "Who says it's deviant?" she snaps back. On matters of intimacy, this gal's a trooper for tolerance.

Well, what's a president to do? More importantly, what's his Republican nemesis to do? This is Rep. Shelly Runyon, played by Gary Oldman, who does an uncannily accurate impression of a frustrated iguana. Runyon, the pro-life antifeminist chairing the confirmation hearings, won't abide a woman vice president. Sides chosen, the film begins. At first, it promises to be a lively debate on current issues, but as the one-sided dialogue kicks in, the audience is left nearly numbed by Lurie's liberal hubris. John Wayne displayed more evenhanded restraint in *The Green Berets*.

Of all the telltale details, perhaps Hanson's visit to her father is the most revealing. Having accepted President Evans' offer, she wants ex-governor Dad's support and advice. She arrives at his home with her darling six-year-old son and waits on the sidelines as the old man finishes his tennis workout. Coming off the court, he asks his grandson if he knows how to get topspin on a ball. "The baby Jesus puts it there," the lad chirps. Visibly shaken by such loathsome superstition, Granddad asks the boy where he heard such "stuff." It was his teacher, Mrs. Maloney. Turning to his daughter, he growls, "I spent my career trying to strike that nonsense out of schools." My, my: a career spent stomping on the baby Jesus. Well, he is for choice. But what about the equally baleful Santa and the Easter Bunny? Surely, he should have spent some time stuffing them into the memory hole as well.

Later, we discover that Hanson has carried her father's torch bravely forward. She is known for her fierce commitment to keeping Church and State hermetically sealed from one another. At the confirmation hearings, the ever-vindictive Runyon quotes her as having once attacked the specter of religion in public life by proclaiming that "We can't have a fairy tale running this nation." Unfazed, she responds with Clintonian aplomb. The real issue, she lectures her inquisitor, is one of "tolerance." She respects all beliefs in their proper place. The sound track swells with violins as she declares her own personal convictions: "I stand for making it a federal crime to sell cigarettes to children. I stand for taking guns out of every house. I stand for a woman's right to choose." She concludes, nodding demurely to their surroundings in the Capitol, "I may be an atheist, but my church is this building!" If only Jimmy Stewart and Frank Capra were still alive!

In another scene, President Evans chummily takes Hanson for a walk on the grounds of the White House. Since he is smoking a cigar, he graciously offers her one. She obliges his generosity with an experimental puff only to be reduced to a coughing spasm. Evans apologizes with a chuckle. "I should have told you, you don't inhale them." He then asks her, with an unctuous smile that's supposed to be disarming, to tell him the truth about her alleged youthful indulgence in oral gratification. What a charming conflation of President Clinton's peccadilloes—all patently pardonable, of course.

Hanson really cannot complain about the president's double entendres and inquiring mind. She may or may not have tried group sex when a coed, but now in her 40's, she's a lusty wench indeed, as we discover when we first meet her, sprawled across her desk in her shadowy senate office. A man stands before her, his pants around his ankles and his shirttails aflutter as he, shall we say, enjoys congress with her. Not to worry; the lunk's her husband. In a movie filled with adoring references to Jack Kennedy, we can be assured that Senator Hanson is merely conducting government with the old JFK vigor. Besides, isn't it true that to govern well one needs to be as sexually active as possible? As she assures one doubtful congressman, "The one thing you don't want is a woman with her finger on the button who isn't getting laid." (We're left to assume she means the nuclear button.) If she's right, then how do we explain Kennedy's and Johnson's war in Vietnam or Clinton's actions toward Kosovo and Iraq? Their vigor in office does not seem to have tempered their button fingers one wit.

Besides being a slick piece of propaganda for the Clinton wing of the Democratic Party, this film is a perfect barometer of Hollywood's political temperament. Everything you ever suspected about the ideological climate of Southern California is here, writ large. If Bill Clinton winds up in Los Angeles working for his film-industry buddies, rest assured that he'll never be homesick.

I'd love to describe Christopher Guest's *Best in Show* in extravagant detail. Were I to do so, however, I'd be trespassing unforgivably on your enjoyment.

This hilarious satire follows the fortunes of five couples who have entered their pampered pooches into a tony dog show. Dog breeders, of course, are a special breed themselves. Guest's genius, however, is not to mock them for their devotion, but to enlist their eccentricities in order to portray a range of foibles all too common to our general human condition.

The teaming of Catherine O'Hara and Eugene Levy is especially inspired. O'Hara plays a blowsy woman whose sexual history would shame the Wife of Bath. Levy is her nerdish husband, a man forever doomed to speechless embarrassment by a steady parade of unseemly revelations from his wife's active past. Vulgar, knockabout farce doesn't get any better than this.

The film is also remarkable for its complete lack of political correctness. It features a number of hetero-, homo-, and otherwise confused sexuals. No proclivity is spared; only the dogs escape with their dignity intact.

I eagerly await the next Guest appearance. c

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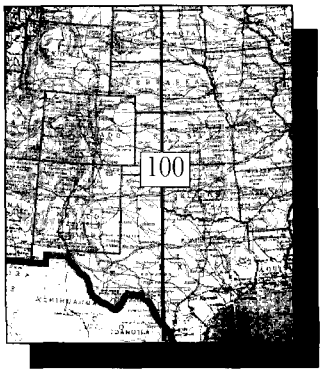
The Hundredth Meridian

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

A Happy Hunting Ground



The alarm clock went off in the dark. In the light of the electric lantern, frost glittered on shadowed nylon walls. The inside zipper stuck; after a few futile tugs I escaped through the mouth of the mummy bag. I had on long johns, wool socks, and a wool shirt, but the predawn cold bit anyhow. The lantern was weak, the tent tall enough to kneel in as I gathered my scattered clothes: wool army pants, leather vest, bandanna kerchief, orange hunting coat. My hunting knife and revolver were at hand, ready in an emergency at the head of the bag. Muddy boots waiting in the vestibule overhanging the tent door, gloves somewhere. I didn't want to be doing this, but I'd pulled two horses 323 miles to do it, so I was. Same old story every year. A man my age ought to be in Florida—but there are no elk in Florida. Only geriatrics from New York, illegal aliens from the Caribbean, and the Bush brothers. The illuminated dial on my wristwatch read 6:08 already. Here we go: like climbing out of your grave in the middle of the night.

The moon, slightly reduced from the half, was on its way down as I emerged from the tent, booted and with the lantern in one hand. Overnight the fire had burned down to a sifting of pale ash at the bottom of the fire pit. With the aid of the lantern I gathered a handful of twigs and the ends of a few dead pine boughs which I tossed on the ashes, hoping for a responsive curl of smoke. No go. Fumbling in the pocket of the hunting coat, I came up with a butane lighter: childproof, with a lock that has to be reset each time you thumb the wheel.

Imagining the innumerable children who must have suffered third-degree burns to that necessary appendage while trying to ignite a birthday candle or light up an illegal cigarette made me want to cry, almost. I broke an inch and a half of ice on the water bucket, filled the coffeepot, and set it to boil on the grate while I went to ready the horses. Nobody else awake in camp: It looks like just me for the morning hunt.

The horses' breath steamed as I worked to saddle up quickly in the redolent aura of equine heat, fumbling at the leather straps with stiffened hands. A few streaks of color showed above the eastern mountains, and then a light came up in Dick McCuistion's tent, a ruddy glow through the red nylon walls. (Why *not* a whorehouse in elk camp? The best equipped ones have all the other conveniences of home.) God it's cold, and we have to ride in a few minutes.

"Wind's up," Dick remarked. "Going to make the hunting pretty hard this morning."

"Hunting's always hard," I said.

We rode out breakfastless at 6:48, not quite early enough to catch the fade-back beyond timberline at first light that follows a moonlit night and usually makes for the best hunting of the day.

For this first season since reestablishing residency in Wyoming I was hunting the eastern slope of the northern Wind River Mountains, after last summer's Fontenelle Fire burned 17 or 18 thousand acres of my old elk grounds in the Wyoming Range north of Kemmerer. Working from a camp set 26 miles northwest of Dubois and a mile and a half east of the Continental Divide, we were concentrating now on the Warm Springs and Trout Creek drainages and the high, wide ridge between them where we'd spotted a cow elk and two yearlings the second morning out. On foot rather than horseback, we watched for half an hour from a pine grove above Warm Springs Creek as they grazed slowly uphill across the face of a steep clearing and into the trees beneath a low saddle in the ridge. Later, I'd returned with the gelding, tied up among plentiful piles of elk pellets scattered in the bitten-down grass, and crossed over with my rifle at the ready, moving carefully and keeping just inside the forest edge. Beyond the ridgeline the east-facing aspect sloped downhill at an easy angle toward the tawny meadow where Trout Creek ran. The hillside had been clearcut 20 years and more ago, and replacement trees, rising to about eight feet in height, sprung fresh and green. Snow lay between the wide-spaced trees, and the snow was imprinted with the tracks of elk going across and up and down hill: scores of elk of both sexes, young, old, and middle-aged. (You can sex an elk track by the disposition of the animal's body weight, toe to heel.) The discovery made it possible to complete the territorial map I'd been sketching in my head. The herd would spend the night on the west side of the ridge, grazing the protein-rich grass and browsing the forbs. Before daylight, they'd go to drink from Warm Springs Creek, then graze their way up and over the ridge after sunrise to the new forest where they could bed down for the day in the sun's warmth, close by the mature timber that is their security. It was what we'd needed to know, the kind of natural bus route that is the key to successful elk hunting. Finally, a clearcut requires logging roads, and we were camped at the head of one of these, behind a closure gate set in place by the Forest Service, on the east slope of the ridge. It seemed a foregone conclusion that our road must cross the clearcut below, offering a downwind approach to the bedded elk herd. I recrossed the ridge to pick up the horse and rode back to camp, where Dick and I laid plans for the morning hunt.

The frozen ruts creaked under the horses' hooves as we rode with our backs to the creeping salmon-colored light and the wind, blowing eastward across the ridge, blindsided us on our left side. It was a bullying, penetrating wind, working its way into my eustachian tubes and cutting under my collar to my tonsils, already inflamed by a stubborn infection.

"I hate the damn wind," I told Dick. "It's like a personal enemy somehow."

"I don't mind the wind as much as I do the rain. I had enough getting wet in Vietnam."

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The road ran through several clearcuts before I recognized the one we were searching for when, looking uphill, I made out the dip in the tree line that indicated the saddle I'd crossed over the day before. I reined the horse to the left, offroad into the crusted snow where we sounded like Napoleon's army on the retreat from Russia.

"No good," Dick said. "They can hear us coming a mile away. We're going to have to do this one on foot. I noticed my knee's looking puffy again this morning."

We tied up beside the logging road and began working our way slowly uphill along the black timber edge. If the horses had sounded like the entire French army, the two of us alone were only slightly quieter than Bedford Forrest's Critter Company.

"They aren't going to be moving anyway in this wind." Dick, who hasn't got *his* residency back, this morning was armed only with a .44 magnum revolver and a game saw.

"I know it," I said. "All this hard work—the getting up early, this wind—for nothing. The fun's over as soon as you pull the trigger, anyway."

We worked our way nearly to the ridgeline without seeing anything fresher than last night's tracks, among hundreds of older ones. At the summit we sat on a log to rest, glass the trees, and watch the sun rise over the Ram's Horn and the Pinnacles in the Absaroka Mountains. The wind was up more than ever, an icy deluge pouring through the saddle looking over into Warm Springs Creek.

"Rick and I were hunting deer in Bridger Basin," Dick remembered. "He was driving, and I was supposed to pick off whatever ran out of the quakies. He jumped two bucks and I dropped the lead one. Hit him right in the engine-room, a clean heart-lung shot. I could see the blood gush—a fountain of blood, like the time we took out that VC sniper at 800 yards with a .308." He paused. "There's times I think I don't want to kill anything ever again."

"Well," I said, "I never went to Vietnam, so I can't comment on that. All I have to say is, I'll hunt elk for as long as I can get about in the field—or as long as there still are elk to hunt."

At the edge of a lid of gray cloud the wind had pushed in, the sun was a diffuse spot of lemon-colored light. Wearily we stood from the log and began working around the far side of the clearcut and down to the road, where we picked up the horses for the ride back to camp.

"First the warm, bright nights and now the damn wind," I said, speaking over my shoulder as the horse skidded and slid in the muddy track. "If the weather would just cooperate, we might take something yet."

"Anything you shoot you'd better shoot by evening. It's all-day work getting a big bull out of here, and I have to be in Sheridan Sunday night."

The wind kept up until past shooting light and arose again with the sun the following morning. The clouds returned, bringing spates of cold rain and snow flurries.

"Too bad we can't afford to wait for the storm to get them moving."

"We don't have the time. My knee hurts like hell from riding a horse all day yesterday."

The pleasures of hunting are not dependent on success in the field (failure means you don't have a half-ton carcass to pack out). In Dubois, Dick and I parted company, he for Sheridan and home, me for a hot shower, clean clothes, and supper at Cavallo Creek restaurant, a home-away-from-home for displaced cosmopolites weary of a diet of steak and potatoes every night. I ordered a bottle of Italian wine with my pasta and shared it with a young lady from Texas wearing something Western by Ralph Lauren who said she didn't understand how anyone could bring himself or herself to kill anything so noble and beautiful as a bull elk—or any other animal, for that matter.

Returning to Laramie after a six-hour pull across the state of Wyoming, I found Maynard dead in her cage. We had been together for one month short of 18 years, after I'd stepped into the Pet Corral in Salt Lake City on a day in late November 1982 to admire their collection of snakes and a particolored parrot in a cage marked "Patagonian Conure $89" squawked at me from the shelf above a handsome blacksnake coiled in his glass tank. Maynard (who was represented to me as being of the male sex and waited seven years to lay her first clutch of eggs) had been a feather-picker the last five years of her life, and I'd bought a veterinarian-approved plastic collar screwing together in two pieces designed to prevent this act of self-mutilation and allow the new plumage to grow back in. The body, not yet completely cold, was lying beneath the food cup a foot or so above the floor of the cage: Apparently the heavy collar had caused her to lose her balance, leading to the fall that had broken her neck. Death must have come quickly, as the eyes were open and the wings unspread. Actuarily speaking, she had 22 years of life ahead of her. (About what statisticians would allow her master.)

It was the end of an era as well as of a cherished companion; also something else I couldn't identify. I laid Maynard, along with the bell she had learned to play *sostenuto*, like an orchestral instrument, away in a waterproof freezer container purchased at the Big K in Laramie and drove out to Jelm Mountain, a pyramidal landmark plainly visible from town 30 miles away. Halfway up the jeep trail ascending to the summit, I turned into a sagebrush park and continued offroad onto a shoulder of the mountain overlooking the Laramie River and, beyond it, the golden hills and dark timbered ridges rolling down to the high peaks of Colorado. Using a long-handled spade and a Marine entrenching tool, I dug a hole three feet deep in a grove of pine trees, placed the coffin at the bottom of it, and filled in the grave. As an afterthought, I drew the sidearm I carried on my hip and emptied the cylinder—six carefully spaced shots—into the sifting snowflakes from a passing squall.

At the bottom of the mountain I stopped for a drink at the log café in Wood's Landing. The barmaid was a healthy, straightforward-looking girl, wearing something that was definitely not by Ralph Lauren. At three o'clock in the afternoon, I was her only customer at the bar. She watched me closely as I tossed back the whiskey and set the shot glass down on the wood.

"Another one?" the girl asked sympathetically. "You look like you just lost your best friend."

"I got done burying her 15 minutes ago up there on the mountain."

The barmaid moved a little closer to the telephone, or maybe to the gun she kept under the counter.

"You buried your girlfriend on Jelm Mountain?"

"Not a girlfriend, exactly. Maynard was a parrot. The best, most intelligent, most loving bird I ever knew."

She relaxed and appeared to consider as she refilled the shot glass from the whiskey bottle.

"I'm not sentimental about animals myself," the girl said finally.

"Neither am I," I told her. "Did you happen to hear if the elk have started moving up here from Colorado yet?" c

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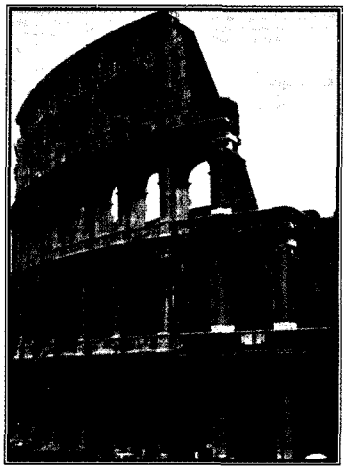

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